

TBAP Unity Academy

Almond Road, St Neots, Cambridgeshire PE19 1EA

Inspection dates

4–5 June 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The acting head of school sets high aspirations for both pupils and staff. Her commitment and care, along with that of dedicated staff, are the driving forces for school improvement. Pupils respond well to the high expectations set and are ready to learn.
- There is effective support from the executive principal, enabling leaders to focus on the quality of education, behaviour and welfare of pupils.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the curriculum is good. Teachers capture pupils' interest well with relevant activities.
- The curriculum provides an appropriate range of subjects that is tailored to match the needs and interests of pupils of different abilities.
- The school provides a safe and nurturing environment. Pupils know what they can and cannot do and how to ask for help if needed.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and that bullying is not tolerated. They are confident that incidents get dealt with quickly and effectively.
- Most pupils concentrate well in lessons and are focused on their learning. They enjoy their lessons and learn well.
- The pupil premium is used effectively to improve the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils.
- The school maintains a coherent record of the provision made for every pupil, especially those who are taught at home or are on part-time timetables.
- All pupils leave the school with a place in education, training or employment.
- The vast majority of parents who replied to Ofsted's free-text service are very positive about the work of the school.
- Teachers currently have a range of data from which to work. However, this information is overcomplicated.
- While the attendance of many pupils is low when they arrive, it quickly improves as they begin to re-engage in education. However, attendance remains below the national average.
- Pupils do not routinely focus on their spelling, punctuation and grammar or write at length in a range of subjects other than English.
- Some pupils do not act upon the written advice given by staff in order to improve their work.
- Pupils do not know enough about other faiths and cultures to be fully prepared for life in modern Britain.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by simplifying how leaders collect, present and use assessment information.
- Improve pupils' attendance so that it is in line with national averages for all pupils.
- Improve outcomes for pupils by ensuring that:
 - staff take opportunities to reinforce literacy in subjects beyond English, so that pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar improve at a rapid rate
 - pupils have good-quality opportunities to practise a range of different writing techniques across the curriculum
 - pupils act on their teachers' advice as to how to improve their work.
- Ensure that all pupils are taught about other faiths and cultures to increase their understanding of tolerance and awareness of life in modern Britain.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The acting head of school, whose previous role was the deputy headteacher, has a clear vision for the school that is shared by staff, pupils and parents. Staff work hard to achieve the school's goals. Pupils understand the high standards expected of them. Consequently, despite some significant changes, achievement has improved noticeably, and the school is a calm, welcoming place.
- The executive principal has provided valuable guidance and support to the school since September 2018. She is forthright about the challenges of the provision and works well with the acting head of school to provide the relevant support and challenge.
- Leaders' self-evaluation documentation provides an accurate account of the school's effectiveness. The school improvement plan has identified appropriate action points. Leaders have welcomed the opportunity to participate in a range of external reviews. The findings of these reviews are studied carefully, improvement plans are updated, and actions are taken to improve the provision wherever required.
- The curriculum meets pupils' needs and interests, while also maintaining its breadth and balance. Pupils are taught useful life skills, including cookery. Leaders review the curriculum offer regularly to ensure that it is designed to meet the needs of individual pupils.
- Leaders work collegiately. They provide a comprehensive training programme for staff. Senior leaders know the stage of different leaders' development and so are able to provide individual support and training. Teachers and learning support professionals welcome the opportunities provided and particularly value the activities that allow them to learn from each other.
- Pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans are carefully maintained. Information is used by staff, who track closely pupils' social and academic development. Parents and carers receive regular updates to let them know how their children are doing.
- Leaders carefully scrutinise the spend and impact of the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding. Funding for pupils is used to target relevant support. The funding has supported the appointment of a peripatetic speech and language therapist to assess and set targets for pupils. The provision of information technology access for some pupils at home has helped improve outcomes.
- Some of the most socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils do not routinely access full-time, on-site provision. Leaders, working with external professionals, ensure that pupils receive personalised provision best suited to their needs. Some have part-time timetables as part of their reintegration back into learning. Pupils' personal timetables were made available during the inspection. Successful re-engagement into education after extended periods of non-attendance is evident. The quality of provision is monitored by leaders to ensure effective progress. Attendance registers are maintained accurately.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's inspection survey for pupils during the inspection. Inspectors spoke formally and informally with pupils, who talked positively about leaders and staff. Pupils value the caring nature and approachability of adults.

- The school has systems for checking pupils' progress in academic, social and emotional aspects of learning. However, there is no amalgamated method of collating this data to ensure ease of monitoring and analysis of the pupils' progress for subjects other than English, mathematics and science.
- Leaders nurture pupils' moral, social and cultural development well. They develop pupils' respect for all and promote equality for different pupils, irrespective of their needs, gender or sexual orientation. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities to learn about other faiths and cultures.

Governance of the school

- Leaders within the Tri-Borough Alternative Provision (TBAP) provide training for staff, and monitor and evaluate the school's work to gain an accurate view of its effectiveness. The trust and the local advisory board check that effective safeguarding procedures are clearly in place. Minutes of meetings demonstrate that the board of trustees asks relevant questions relating to the leadership and management of the school.
- The chair of the local advisory board is loyally committed to the school's success and demonstrates an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- The local advisory board reviews and reports on the school's performance to the regional advisory board, who reports to the trust board.
- Members of the local advisory board are clear about the quality of teaching and learning, behaviour and welfare, and know how pupils are achieving in the school. Members have an innate knowledge and understanding of the local environment to support pupils to fulfil their aspirations.
- Members of the local advisory board have worked admirably with leaders and have helped to support the school through difficult decisions.
- Minutes of the local advisory board do not reflect the support and challenge that the members provide.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school has an up-to-date safeguarding policy on its website which takes into account the government's current requirements.
- Appropriate checks are made on staff and visitors. Newly appointed members of staff receive an induction into safeguarding requirements. Minor adjustments were made to the school's single central record during the inspection to ensure that it was compliant.
- There is a strong culture of keeping pupils safe in the school. Staff are clear on what to do if they have a concern about the welfare of a pupil. Communication with parents, carers and the local authority is effective. The school works successfully with external agencies to keep pupils safe. Records are well kept and are stored securely.
- All staff have completed online training on the 'Prevent' duty which has increased their knowledge about how to keep pupils safe from the threat of radicalisation. Staff are

vigilant in identifying potential risks, such as pupils at risk of being involved in gangs and sexual exploitation.

- Pupils are taught how to keep safe, including when using social media.
- Risk assessments are regularly carried out. Access to the school site is securely controlled to keep pupils safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- When pupils start at the school, they are assessed by staff to establish what they know, can do and understand about their learning. This assessment is used as a baseline to plan activities which engage and inspire pupils and meet their needs. The progress that pupils make quickens as they become more secure and confident in their learning.
- Teachers have secure knowledge of the subjects that they teach which they use well to plan activities that interest pupils and encourage them to engage in their learning. This is evident in some of the high-quality work seen, for example pupils' art coursework.
- Teachers and learning support professionals quickly establish routines and make their expectations clear to pupils. The calm, purposeful environment seen in many lessons ensures that pupils can work hard and enjoy their studies. Little learning time is lost as a result.
- Teachers use assessment information available to inform their planning for lessons. This promotes learning and identifies the next steps pupils need to take to improve their performance. They also use pupils' targets from their EHC plans to develop independent progress steps.
- Relationships between staff, learning support professionals and pupils are very positive. These relationships underpin learning in classes. Most of the time, pupils are ready to learn and willing to take part in lessons.
- The learning support professionals are fully aware of their role in the classroom and where the provision is at its best the impact of learning support professionals is indistinguishable from that of teachers. Learning support professionals understand the type of support and interventions pupils need to be able to access their learning.
- Teaching is particularly effective in science and mathematics, which pupils say they particularly enjoy. Pupils' work in their books is of a good quality.
- The school's own feedback procedures are consistently implemented. Consequently, pupils understand how to improve their work. However, some pupils do not act upon the advice given by staff to improve their work further.
- In some subjects teachers do not address errors in pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar in order to develop their literacy skills.
- Pupils are not routinely given opportunities to practise their different writing techniques in a range of subjects other than English. Consequently, some pupils still do not convey their ideas with enough precision. The most effective teaching supported pupils to sequence their thinking before writing, and thus write more clearly.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. It is a strength of the school. Most pupils feel proud to be at the school. One pupil represented the views of many when he stated, 'This is a second family.'
- Pupils who inspectors spoke with during the inspection said that they feel safe in the school and know they can approach adults if they have a worry or a concern. Pupils are confident that any incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively and quickly by school staff.
- Pupils talked articulately with inspectors. Pupils are well informed about how to keep themselves safe, how to stay healthy, their rights and responsibilities.
- Pupils have access to a wide range of extra-curricular activities such as horse riding, music, sports and trips. Pupils describe teachers as very caring and supportive, encouraging them to participate in their learning and the social opportunities available.
- The vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) indicate that their children are happy, feel safe and that the school looks after them.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Most pupils move sensibly around the building and follow the instructions of staff. A calm atmosphere permeates the school.
- The majority of pupils wear their uniform correctly. They keep the school tidy. Pupils are well behaved at breaktimes and lunchtimes, valuing the opportunity to sit and talk to each other and enjoy the outdoor recreation area.
- Systems of rewards and sanctions are well understood by pupils and support their learning of right and wrong. Pupils gain reward points on a daily basis. Certificates are presented to pupils in a weekly assembly for those maintaining a positive work ethic.
- Records of behaviour, bullying and racist incidents are kept, and the action taken to follow up on these matters when they arise is recorded systematically. Information is analysed routinely to identify patterns and trends in order to support improvement.
- Short, fixed-period exclusions are used appropriately to reinforce behaviour expectations. If a pupil is repeatedly excluded, leaders call multi-agency meetings to review the support provided to that pupil.
- Pupils join the school with a history of poor attendance at their previous schools. Some have not attended regular education for over a year. Pupils' attendance is significantly higher than at their previous schools but overall remains below the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- All pupils have an EHC plan. Many pupils arrive with a history of disrupted education. Staff assess pupils on entry to establish what they know and can do.
- The school's assessment information shows that there is a clear trend of improved progress and attainment for all ability groups, often from very low starting points, across all year groups and subject areas. This is because teachers and learning support professionals have high aspirations for their pupils, reflecting the unrelenting determination of leaders for all pupils to succeed.
- In 2018, pupils in Year 11 were entered for a range of examinations in GCSE, BTEC National Diploma, functional skills and entry level 2 and 3 qualifications. Pupils who sat examinations all gained qualifications in English, mathematics and science. Pupils also gained qualifications in the humanities and information technology. Those who followed BTEC National Diploma courses were all successful in gaining accreditation.
- Most pupils enjoy coming to school and enjoy studying. Staff work hard to raise pupils' aspirations. Pupils speak highly of the positive approach of leaders and the constructive working relationships with staff across a range of subjects. In most cases the longer pupils attend the school the better progress they make.
- Pupils' rate of progress is measured carefully in the context of their individual needs. Inspectors looked at how the school cross-references pupils' targets in their EHC plans. Inspection evidence indicates that the majority of pupils show good levels of improvement from their starting points.
- Current pupils have made at least steady progress from their starting points in English. Pupils have made good progress from their starting points in a broad range of subjects across the key stages, notably in science and mathematics.
- Current pupils have made good progress in developing their communication skills, self-confidence and self-esteem.
- Inspectors' scrutiny of work across a range of years and subjects suggests that the current rate of good progress is set to continue due to pupils' self-esteem increasing.
- The school provides a detailed programme of careers guidance. It is woven into the curriculum and relates to relevant occupations. For example, in science pupils are taught about alloys and car mechanics. In food technology, pupils are taught about careers in hospitality. As part of the life skills course pupils learn how to write their curriculum vitae, participate in mock interviews and how to complete application forms.
- Pupils spoken with formally and informally are keen to continue with their studies further. In 2018, all pupils progressed to education, employment or further training.

School details

Unique reference number	142932
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10088636

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	90
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of local advisory board	Jude Letchmere
Acting head of school	Sarah Anderson-Rawlins
Telephone number	020 3108 0345
Website	www.tbap.org.uk/unity
Email address	unityadmin@tbap.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school joined the TBAP multi-academy trust in August 2016. The school aims to provide special provision for pupils who are non-attenders from mainstream education.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school operates over two sites; TBAP Unity St Neots and TBAP Unity Wisbech. Both sites are led by one head of school and shared senior and middle leadership teams.
- When it's predecessor school was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to require improvement overall.
- The acting head of school, previously the deputy headteacher, has been in position since the previous headteacher left in December 2018. The executive principal took up post in September 2018.
- The head of school reports to the local advisory board. The chair of the local advisory

board is a member of the regional advisory board. The chair of the regional advisory board is a trustee.

- The executive headteacher reports to the regional advisory board, who reports to the trust board.
- There are 90 pupils on roll. There are 60 pupils at the St Neots site and 30 pupils at the Wisbech site. All the pupils have social, emotional and mental health needs.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- A few pupils are taught off-site, at home. The local authority is aware of the pupils and the professional support provided to them.
- A larger proportion of pupils than average are eligible for the pupil premium. Most pupils are boys; a smaller-than-average number are from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The school is registered to admit pupils between the ages of 11 to 16. At the time of the inspection, five pupils of post-16 age were on the school roll. Cambridgeshire local authority is aware of this and supports their placement at the school. Inspectors found evidence to show that the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) continues to process the school's application to accommodate up to 10 post-16 pupils at the school. As such, the government website 'Get information about schools' does not currently display the correct age range of pupils attending the school.

Information about this inspection

- Meetings were held with the acting head of school and other leaders, school staff, groups of pupils and the chair of the local advisory board. Staff and pupils were also spoken to informally throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors observed learning in class; the majority were seen jointly with a senior leader. Inspectors observed pupils at breaktime and lunchtime.
- The lead inspector held telephone conversations with the chief executive of the TBAP multi-academy trust and a representative of Cambridgeshire local authority, who commissions places at the school.
- There were 16 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 13 responses to Ofsted's free-text service.
- Inspectors considered the 15 staff responses to the Ofsted online staff survey.
- There were no responses to the Ofsted pupil survey.
- Inspectors looked in detail at a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, safeguarding records and procedures, and the school's information about pupils' attainment and progress. Records of pupils' attendance and behaviour were viewed. Pupils' books from different subjects and year groups were checked to view the quality of work. Inspectors read details of the work of the local advisory board and the trust.

Inspection team

Stefanie Lipinski-Barltrop, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Cindy Impey	Her Majesty's Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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