

Unique Children's School

1a Dukes Avenue, London N10 2PS

Inspection dates

8–10 July 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
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 school that requires improvement

- The proprietor has not ensured that all of the independent school standards are met.
- The proprietor has not been vigilant in ensuring that procedures and policies ensure the well-being of all staff and pupils.
- Some pupils' attendance improves significantly when they start at the school. However, some pupils do not arrive on time or sustain their attendance in class.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has established a nurturing environment that re-engages pupils in their learning and instils a sense of self-worth. Pupils generally show respect and tolerance towards each other and behave well.
- The headteacher aims for every pupil to excel academically, socially and emotionally. She quickly builds trusting relationships and plans activities that build on pupils' interests and abilities.
- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their choices and learn how to seek help should they be at risk.
- The curriculum is broad and bespoke. Pupils are encouraged to develop their interests and aptitudes, while learning about life in modern Britain. Academic themed sessions are complemented by well-being sessions and therapeutic interventions.
- Most pupils join the school for interim periods in their education. Many have gaps in their schooling. The headteacher quickly assesses pupils' knowledge and skills and plans appropriately. Most make good progress as a result.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- The proprietor must ensure that:
 - procedures and systems to ensure the well-being of staff and pupils are checked regularly to ensure that they are effective
 - staff at the premises work collectively and effectively to encourage pupils to attend school regularly and on time.
- The school must meet the independent school standards, as set out in the annex of this report.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The proprietor has not ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- The proprietor is not vigilant in checking that all policies and procedures are effective and that they ensure the well-being of staff and pupils. For instance, staff references are not collected in a systematic and timely way.
- The headteacher of the school has high aspirations for all pupils. She quickly establishes trusting relationships so that she can ascertain pupils' interests, skills and knowledge. Consequently, she plans a bespoke curriculum that meets the academic, social and emotional needs of each pupil.
- The curriculum is broad and focuses on utilising pupils' interests to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. A thematic approach ensures that pupils study science, technology and humanities. During the afternoon, sessions focus on developing pupils' well-being through physical education, therapy and preparing them for life in modern Britain.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well through group and individual activities. The headteacher plans events and visits that widen pupils' understanding of the world, such as a recent trip to the Churchill War Rooms and the British Museum. Some activities enhance pupils' latent interests and aspirations so that they feel involved in the topics they study.
- Careers guidance is provided by the headteacher and an external adviser who visits the school termly. The headteacher ensures that activities, visits and trips are planned to explore the range of opportunities available to pupils and raise their aspirations. For example, pupils were preparing for a visit to the University College London's library at the end of the week.
- The placing authorities are complimentary about the work the headteacher has done to raise pupils' self-esteem and re-engage them in their learning.

Governance

- There is no governing body at the school. Consequently, there is no external system to hold the proprietor to account.

Safeguarding

- The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) in the children's home is experienced, well trained and vigilant. She knows pupils well and works closely with the headteacher to address individual needs. The DSL and the headteacher work with a range of stakeholders – in social care, the police and health agencies – to access swift support for those in need. Pupils' highly complex needs are therefore addressed in a timely manner.
- Record-keeping is comprehensive and well managed to ensure that actions are followed up in a timely way. Staff have access to a range of face-to-face and online training, including on the 'Prevent' duty. They are clear about the complex needs of their pupils and work closely together to address their sometimes challenging behaviour. Staff are clear about their responsibilities to keep pupils safe and believe that they are well looked

after.

- Checks on the suitability of staff to work at the school are in line with statutory guidance.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The headteacher knows pupils very well. She sets activities at an appropriate level to ensure that pupils can access the materials but are also challenged to learn new knowledge. Resources are of high quality, relevant and interesting.
- The headteacher carefully chooses topics that will engage individual pupils in their learning. She focuses one-to-one teaching on what pupils already know and where there are gaps in their learning. Pupils value the intensive support they receive, which is tailored carefully to their individual needs. Consequently, they are interested in their work and make good progress.
- The headteacher continuously assesses what pupils know and what they can do. She prepares a monthly report which details both pupils' achievements and areas of concern, such as any poor attendance. These reports on pupils' academic performance feed into overall reports to the placing authority.
- The thematic approach to teaching has proved successful in re-engaging pupils. For instance, recently, pupils raised chicks from eggs, nurturing them, classifying them and studying animal biology. This enabled pupils to work together, discuss issues such as raising animals for the food chain and understanding the responsibility of looking after living things.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils arrive at the school with highly complex social, behavioural and emotional needs. The headteacher quickly establishes positive and productive relationships with each pupil. She focuses her efforts on establishing a trusting and safe environment where pupils can learn.
- Afternoon sessions are dedicated to pupils' well-being. These activities are bespoke to individual pupils and based on their individual needs and interests. The headteacher works closely with the therapist and home staff to plan activities that will extend pupils' learning. For instance, horticulture therapy has proved very popular with some pupils. As a result, the garden has examples of flowers and vegetables grown by pupils.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- In class, pupils work well. The classroom atmosphere is calm and purposeful. Pupils are clear about the headteacher's expectations. They work diligently towards their 'token' goal, which encourages them to manage their behaviour appropriately.
- The attendance of some pupils has improved significantly since they arrived at the

premises. However, some still attend too infrequently, arrive late or find it difficult to sustain their interest throughout the learning session.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils are admitted to the school at different times throughout the academic year. Many arrive with significant gaps in their knowledge and understanding and complex social and emotional needs. Some only stay for a short period of time. The headteacher is quick to form trusting and productive relationships with each pupil so that she can plan an appropriate curriculum to meet their individual needs.
- Improving literacy and numeracy is a high priority for the headteacher. She hears pupils read, reads to them or they read together and then discuss the text. Pupils go to the local community library to borrow books. Some study texts in preparation for the English GCSE examination. While many pupils are not confident writers, they are encouraged to practise writing for a range of audiences and purposes. Pupils' work seen during the inspection indicates that pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- The headteacher is keen for pupils to study accredited courses. Depending on their academic ability, pupils study for GCSEs and functional skills qualifications, particularly in English, mathematics and science. Until now, none have been in the school long enough to achieve GCSE qualifications, although some have been entered successfully for functional skills.

School details

Unique reference number	145295
DfE registration number	309/6006
Inspection number	10083769

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 school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	5
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Hinal Patel
Chair	Hinal Patel
Headteacher	Alex Dimou
Annual fees (day pupils)	£31,200
Telephone number	020 8292 3060
Website	There is no website
Email address	education.uch@btconnect.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The proprietor was running an unregistered independent school on the premises of Unique children's home. Following a section 97 unannounced inspection on 29 March 2017, the proprietor was issued with a caution and a warning notice.
- The proprietor then applied to register the school with the Department for Education (DfE).
- Following a pre-registration visit on 5 March 2018, the unregistered school was deemed to be likely to meet the independent school standards if it complied with part 7, which focuses on the manner in which complaints are handled.

- The DfE asked the proprietor to submit a revised complaints policy for Ofsted to evaluate.
- On 20 July 2018, a monitoring inspection confirmed that the school had met all the independent school standards.
- The school was registered with the DfE in August 2018.
- The school's teaching assistant has recently left. A replacement has not yet been found.
- There is no governing body at the school.
- No pupils attend any alternative provision.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan and are resident at the children's home.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was aligned with a social care inspection of the children's home. Both inspectors worked together to arrive at their separate judgements about the quality of education provided in the school and the quality of care provided by the children's home.
- The inspector held discussions with the proprietor, the headteacher and the children's home manager, who is also the DSL, about the context of the school, the progress of the pupils and their social and emotional development.
- The inspector undertook a detailed walk of the site to ascertain the suitability of the premises and whether safeguarding arrangements are effective.
- The inspector took account of the one response to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, four responses to the pupil survey and eight responses to the staff survey.
- The inspector scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including curriculum plans, schemes of work, school policies and other records relating to compliance with the independent school standards.
- The inspector spoke to the headteachers of the virtual schools for children looked after in two placing authorities.
- The inspector spoke to staff at the children's home and those pupils who were willing to take part in a discussion.
- The inspectors reviewed safeguarding records, policies and procedures. They checked the school's procedures for ensuring the safer recruitment of staff and looked at staff files. They spoke to the DSL about roles and responsibilities.

Inspection team

Helen Matthews, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

Part 6. Provision of information

- 32(1) The standard about the provision of information by the school is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 32(1)(h) where a pupil wholly or partly funded by a local authority (except where funding is solely for free of charge early years provision in accordance with the duty contained in section 7 of the Childcare Act 2006[16]) is registered at the school, an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of that pupil is provided to the local authority and, on request, to the Secretary of State.
- 32(2) The information specified in this sub-paragraph is-
 - 32(2)(a) the school's address and telephone number and the name of the headteacher;
 - 32(2)(b)(i) where the proprietor is an individual, the proprietor's full name, address for correspondence during both term time and holidays and a telephone number or numbers on which the proprietor may be contacted.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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