

Inspection of Unity Academy

113 Forest Road West, Radford, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire NG7 4ES

Inspection dates: 14–15 September 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils have good relationships with staff. The staff know about the pupils' often complex behavioural needs. They work hard to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Pupils say that they feel safe because of the care of the adults they work with. They say that bullying rarely happens. Staff help pupils to behave well. They do so by showing pupils how to act and speak. Leaders are ambitious in their vision that pupils should be 'aspirational, responsible and enthusiastic'.

All pupils attend off-site provisions full time. Most enjoy going to these provisions. Where the provision is well matched to pupils' needs, they engage well with their learning. Many have improved attendance when compared with their previous school. Many leave with qualifications that help them take their next steps. Some pupils return to mainstream schools.

Not all pupils at the school have the same positive experience in their learning. Leaders have not ensured that all pupils attend provisions where the learning is carefully planned to meet their needs. Some pupils miss out on the key knowledge they need to succeed in later life. Sometimes, the learning needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are not met as well as they could be.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders are ambitious for their pupils to engage with learning. They work hard to encourage their pupils to learn. Leaders have taken great care to share information about pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs with the provisions pupils attend. Leaders regularly check that pupils receive the necessary support to manage their behaviour. This has helped reduce the number of pupils who move provisions because of their behaviour. Leaders do not always give enough thought to how different provisions might meet all the learning needs of pupils with SEND.

Pupils can study vocational subjects such as construction and mechanics. In these subjects, teachers break down key knowledge into small steps. This helps pupils to understand how to complete more complex tasks. For example, pupils were able to solder pipes accurately because they understood each part of the process.

In some subjects, including English and mathematics, how well pupils understand what they learn depends on the provision they attend. In some provisions, pupils achieve well. However, leaders have not made sure that staff in all provisions know how best to teach pupils so that they know and remember more. Leaders have not ensured, for example, that staff in all provisions identify gaps in pupils' knowledge. As a result, some pupils do not receive enough opportunities to fill the knowledge gaps they have before encountering new learning. Leaders have recently begun to encourage staff from all provisions to share ideas on how best to help pupils learn.

The school's work to promote a love of reading and to support pupils who struggle to read is inconsistent. Leaders have not ensured that all provisions use planned reading programmes to help pupils who struggle to read become confident readers.

Pupils receive independent advice and guidance about the world of work. They have opportunities to meet employers and go on work experience. They learn about further education. The provision meets the requirements of the Baker Clause.

Leaders have prioritised the teaching of personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE). In some provisions, the planned learning in PSHE is very well suited to pupils' needs. When this is the case, pupils understand the need to respect people's differences. This includes differences in culture, tradition and belief. They also know how to develop healthy relationships and keep themselves safe, including when online. However, leaders have not ensured that this is the case across all provisions.

There is a newly appointed local governing body. Governors are beginning to understand the complex nature of the school and how to provide effective challenge and support. Trust leaders know what aspects of the provision need to improve, including around the quality of education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff understand the importance of keeping pupils safe. They are well trained in safeguarding procedures and know whom to speak to if they have a concern. Leaders have ensured that they are made aware immediately of any safeguarding concerns that may arise in any of the alternative provisions. Leaders act quickly to address any safeguarding issues, including by working closely with other agencies to secure the most appropriate support for pupils. Leaders keep accurate records of any safeguarding concerns. Pupils learn how to understand and manage risks they may face. Leaders quickly resolved a safeguarding weakness that inspectors identified.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There is too much variation in the quality of education pupils receive across the different provisions, particularly in English and mathematics. Not all pupils experience well-planned, sequenced learning. Pupils do not routinely receive the support they need to fill any knowledge gaps they may have before encountering new learning. Leaders should ensure that, in all subjects across all provisions, staff plan curriculums that identify and address pupils' knowledge gaps, so that pupils can build their knowledge and skills successfully over time.

- Pupils with SEND who have additional learning needs do not routinely have these needs met through an appropriate curriculum. This can result in these pupils falling further behind. Leaders should ensure that the provisions that pupils with SEND attend have the necessary staff and suitable programmes in place to meet all these pupils' learning needs so that they achieve as well as they should.
- Until recently, leaders have not done enough to assure themselves of the quality of education across the different provisions. This has prevented leaders from resolving any inconsistencies in how well pupils learn across the different provisions. Leaders should ensure that those who check on the quality of education pupils receive have the necessary knowledge and skills to do so accurately.
- There is no planned approach to develop pupils' love of reading and to support those who struggle to read. As a result, not all pupils receive the support they need to become fluent and confident readers. Leaders should ensure that pupils who struggle to read receive the support they need to read confidently. Leaders should make sure that all pupils are encouraged to read widely from a range of literature and texts.
- Some pupils do not have opportunities to explore different cultures, beliefs and traditions. These pupils are not as well prepared for life in modern Britain as they could be. Leaders should ensure that all pupils receive opportunities to learn about how people may have different values and beliefs from theirs, and to respect these differences.
- Members of the local governing body have not yet had time to complete their training plans to ensure that they are fully prepared for their role. They are not yet in a position to provide leaders with the necessary challenge and support, including regarding the school's curriculum ambition. Leaders should make sure that these governors develop the knowledge they need to hold leaders fully to account.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	144023
Local authority	Nottingham
Inspection number	10200433
Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Academy alternative provision sponsored
Age range of pupils	14 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	111
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Eileen Heartley
Principal	Matthew McCluskey
Website	www.denewoodunity.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school caters primarily for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs.
- All pupils have been referred to the school by Nottingham City Council due to being permanently excluded from their previous school.
- The school is part of the Raleigh Learning Trust.
- The school places all its pupils with off-site alternative provisions. These provisions are a mix of two alternative provision academies, three independent schools and 10 unregistered alternative provisions.

Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school, and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the principal, two assistant principals, three members of the local governing body and a trustee. Inspectors also met with the trust’s chief executive officer and the trust’s safeguarding lead.
- The lead inspector spoke with two representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors visited 11 different off-site provisions that pupils attend.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, PSHE education and a range of vocational subjects. For each deep dive, where it was possible, inspectors looked at curriculum plans, held discussions with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils’ work.
- Inspectors met with safeguarding leads and staff to discuss the school’s procedures to keep pupils safe. They reviewed safeguarding records. The lead inspector checked the school’s single central record.
- Inspectors took into account 14 responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the online parent and carer survey, Parent View, or to the pupil survey. Inspectors took into account surveys the school had conducted with pupils and parents and spoke to parents via telephone.
- Inspectors talked to pupils to gather their views about their placements, pupils’ behaviour, their safety, their learning, and wider opportunities for their personal development.

Inspection team

Dave Gilkerson, lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Rakesh Patel

Her Majesty’s Inspector

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Ofsted Inspector

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