

# Inspection of Unity College

150 West Wycombe Road, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire HP12 3AE

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Inspection dates: 8 to 10 February 2022

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Outstanding**

Personal development **Outstanding**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Staff care deeply about each pupil and they fully understand their individual strengths, interests and needs. They make sure that all pupils are safe at school. Staff skilfully provide support when pupils struggle to manage their emotions. They have a calm and consistent approach. One pupil said, 'Teachers give us opportunities to really be our best self. They trust us and I just love that.'

Pupils behave exceptionally well. Leaders and staff have high expectations. There is a highly respectful and harmonious atmosphere in classrooms and around school. Pupils know that there is always a trusted adult with whom they can share any worries or concerns. They are confident that staff will act quickly to stop any bullying that might occur.

Pupils appreciate the excellent support they receive to promote their personal development. Pupils wholeheartedly participate in the extensive range of activities, events and educational visits provided. For instance, pupils go to concerts, and visit the theatre, museums, different cities in England, places of worship and art galleries. These opportunities develop and enhance their knowledge of fundamental British values. Other activities such as charity work and work experience strongly promote pupils' self-esteem, confidence and teamwork.

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

The dynamic and much-respected headteacher and his team have established a considerate, purposeful and inclusive ethos in the school. Staff work very well together and are superb role models for the pupils. High staff morale and an inherent team spirit at all levels contribute well to the school's positive, upbeat, can-do culture.

School leaders and governors have a clear vision about the education that they want to provide. The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the needs of all pupils. It has been designed to help pupils to successfully overcome some of their considerable barriers to learning. Curriculum subjects are well sequenced and enable pupils to learn the essential knowledge in the right order. Pupils complete GCSEs and other accredited awards by the time they have reached the end of Year 11. They are supported well to decide next steps in education and potential career pathways.

Leaders have placed a high priority on reading. Often, pupils have fallen behind in their reading before joining the school. Well-trained staff efficiently help pupils become fluent readers. They carefully identify gaps in pupils' phonics knowledge and help them to catch up quickly. The books that pupils read support them to practise the sounds and strategies they learn. Teachers provide pupils with a diverse and interesting selection of books to ignite their love of reading. Leaders have identified that some pupils do not read as widely or as often as they could.

Teachers have a comprehensive understanding of pupils' additional needs. They assess pupils' learning continuously and adapt activities accordingly. Teachers choose topics that keep pupils interested and stretch them. They set tasks that challenge pupils to recall previous learning and help them make links in their work. Staff build pupils' resilience and celebrate their successes. Overall, leaders know how well pupils are achieving. They make sure that the curriculum is adjusted to meet pupils' needs effectively. However, this is not consistent across all subjects in the school's curriculum. Some of the subject leaders are new to their roles and do not have a clear enough oversight of how well pupils are achieving.

Pupils learn about and adopt healthy lifestyles. For example, they participate in a wide range of sporting activities such as tennis, football and ice skating. The school has appropriate plans in place to comply with Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance on relationships and sex education and health education.

Pupils' understanding of life in modern Britain is exceptional. They have a deep and, at times, profound respect and appreciation of the views, choices and beliefs of others. They organise and hold debates on topics such as racism, legal age of voting and gender identity. One pupil said, 'We value everyone as individuals. We do not discriminate or have stereotypes towards others.' The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

The proprietor has a robust oversight of the school's work. The proprietor works effectively with leaders to make sure that all independent school standards are consistently met. The proprietor knows well what needs to improve further in the quality of education.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors put pupils' welfare first. Staff receive regular training. Staff know pupils well. They are highly alert and report even the smallest of concerns. Leaders have a robust oversight of pupils' behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. Leaders are quick to seek advice from other agencies and make referrals in a timely manner. They are persistent in their effort to secure the support that pupils need.

Pupils have a clear understanding of the benefits and risks of the internet. They are aware of the dangers of posting things online, including personal information and images.

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

#### **(Information for the school and proprietor)**

- Some of the subject leaders are new to their roles. They do not have a clear overview of how well pupils learn and remember the essential knowledge in their subjects. Leaders need to continue providing training for subject leaders. This will

ensure that these leaders successfully play their part in assessing the effectiveness of the curriculum and ensure that all pupils achieve well.

- Some pupils do not have a love of reading. Leaders should continue their successful focus on ensuring that pupils have maximum opportunities to read widely and often. This will support pupils' learning across the curriculum as well as helping them find pleasure in reading.

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

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136373
<b>DfE registration number</b>	825/6043
<b>Local authority</b>	Buckinghamshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10214659
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent special school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	12
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Nicola Kelly
<b>Chair</b>	Nicola Kelly
<b>Headteacher</b>	Martin Dyer
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£36,400
<b>Telephone number</b>	01494 446371
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://www.keys-group.co.uk/services/education/unity-college/">https://www.keys-group.co.uk/services/education/unity-college/</a>
<b>Email address</b>	admin.unitycollege@keyschildcare.co.uk
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	26 to 28 September 2017

## Information about this school

- Unity College provides full-time education for up to 26 boys and girls between 11 and 16 years of age requiring support with social, emotional and mental health issues.
- All pupils have experienced significant difficulties and disruption to their education.
- The school opened and first admitted pupils in January 2011. It is run by the Keys Childcare Group, under a contractual arrangement with the Thames Valley Cross-Regional Project. This is a partnership of six local authorities that places and funds the pupils at the school.
- It caters for those who are accommodated in residential homes operated by the school's proprietor.
- The current headteacher has been in post since January 2022. The school is led by the headteacher, with oversight from the proprietor's director of education, regional director of operations and director of the cross-regional project.
- Currently, 12 full-time pupils are on roll, aged between 11 and 16 years of age. All current pupils are in the care of their local authority, and nine of the pupils currently on roll have an education, health and care plan.
- At the time of this inspection, the school was using four alternative providers.

## Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

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

- Inspectors considered reading, mathematics and personal, social and health education (PSHE) as part of the inspection. Inspectors met with pupils to discuss their learning and looked at their work. Inspectors also met the teachers of these subjects.
- The inspectors held a wide range of meetings during the inspection. These included meetings with the proprietor, two governors, school leaders, all staff, and pupils. Telephone discussions were also held with the placing local authorities and care home managers.

- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors reviewed a range of the school's documentation, including behaviour and safeguarding records, and held discussions with leaders, staff and pupils.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey and survey responses from the carers.
- The inspection team reviewed a range of documentation, including policies and documents associated with the independent school standards. The lead inspector reviewed the school's website.

### **Inspection team**

Shazia Akram, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Clive Close

Her Majesty's Inspector

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