

Inspection of Unity City Academy

Ormesby Road, Middlesbrough TS3 8RE

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 May 2022

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Unity City Academy is a welcoming and inclusive school. Leaders have a lot of ambition for the pupils and they understand the local community well. Pupils enjoy coming to school and they take advantage of the lessons and opportunities available to them. This high aspiration is reflected in the broad curriculum and the positive environment in school.

Pupils appreciate the range of extra-curricular activities that are available to widen their experience and develop their leadership skills. These popular activities include the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme and the Combined Cadet Force.

Behaviour in school and lessons is good. The calm atmosphere in lessons allows pupils to get on with their work. Pupils describe a culture of tolerance and respect. Inspectors agree; they saw this during the inspection.

Relationships between pupils and staff are warm and friendly. Pupils feel safe and they know staff will help them if they face any difficulties. The pupils spoken to during the inspection told us that any bullying is dealt with effectively.

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

Pupils are studying a wide range of subjects at both key stage 3 and key stage 4. All pupils are able to enter the English Baccalaureate group of subjects (science, history, geography and languages). Leaders are ensuring the number of pupils taking these subjects is increasing. Pupils are encouraged to think about the wider skills they are developing in lessons, such as problem-solving, linking ideas together and empathising with others.

While the overall curriculum is ambitious and broad, in some subjects, some components need teaching in greater depth to help pupils to embed their knowledge and skills.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and they explain things to pupils very clearly. In lessons, teachers check pupils have understood what they are learning. However, at key stage 3, some of the more formal assessments are not focused enough on the precise knowledge pupils need to remember. Leaders know this and are reviewing their approach to assessment.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified and supported effectively. Most pupils with SEND are fully involved in the mainstream curriculum. Some pupils spend some of the time in a specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND (specially resourced provision). The curriculum for these pupils is carefully planned to meet their needs. It matches the ambition of the curriculum for all pupils. As a result of this, pupils with SEND are developing their knowledge and skills effectively.

There is a clear reading strategy in the school. Pupils receive at least one reading lesson per week, more if they need extra support with reading. All subjects promote reading and developing vocabulary. Some pupils in Year 10 are trained to help younger pupils with reading. This is having an impact, and this progress in reading is helping pupils to learn more in their other subjects.

The school places a lot of emphasis on teaching personal development. Leaders have thought carefully about the range of topics taught in personal development lessons. This ensures that pupils understand how to stay safe, and to be prepared for life after school. Pupils told us they really value the ethics and tutor lessons. They gave examples of useful topics they learn in these lessons, such as healthy relationships and how to manage a budget. This is contributing effectively to the social, moral and cultural education of pupils.

Pupils receive independent careers advice. Teachers encourage pupils to think about what they could achieve when they leave school. Career options and university choices are routinely discussed in tutor time. This means the school meets the demands of the Baker Clause. The careers programme is effective because pupils told us how it gives them a sense of direction. Hardly any pupils leave school without a definite destination.

Trust leaders have the skills and knowledge to challenge and support school leaders. They have focused on specific areas to help Unity City Academy improve. The trust board ensures that resources have the most impact on pupils. For example, the recent investment to support pupils' reading. Staff are extremely positive about working at the school. They are proud to work there and feel supported to develop their skills and manage their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have strong systems in place to quickly identify any safeguarding concerns. There are weekly meetings to monitor and put in place support for any pupil who is facing personal difficulties. The school works effectively with a variety of agencies which helps to safeguard and support pupils. There is an effective culture of safeguarding in the school. This is because staff are trained to a high standard. Staff have a good understanding of the specific safeguarding issues which are most relevant to the local area.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The overall curriculum is broad and balanced. However, in some subjects, some components need teaching in greater depth. Leaders should make sure that

pupils spend more time embedding and deepening their knowledge of the curriculum.

- Teachers regularly check what pupils know and understand. However, some assessment at key stage 3 is too focused on the skills and concepts needed at key stage 4. Leaders must ensure that assessment at key stage 3 helps teachers to inform their teaching.

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	133768
Local authority	Middlesbrough
Inspection number	10227425
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	840
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Hatchett
Principal	Andrew Rodgers
Website	https://sites.google.com/aetinet.org/unity-city-academy/home
Date of previous inspection	17 December 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has a specially resourced provision for 30 pupils with moderate learning difficulties.
- The school sends a small number of pupils to three alternative education providers. Two of those are registered providers and subject to inspection by Ofsted.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualification and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors 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 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken this into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders, including those responsible for safeguarding. The lead inspector met with members of the trust board.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, history, art and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum 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.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and reviewed the school's safeguarding records.
- A range of documentation was reviewed. This included minutes from trust board meetings, curriculum plans and behaviour records.
- Inspectors considered the views given in Ofsted's online surveys from 155 pupils and 62 staff. Inspectors also considered the views of 155 parents reflected in the Ofsted Parent View survey.

Inspection team

Carl Sugden, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Joe Barton	Ofsted Inspector
Erica Hiorns	Ofsted Inspector
John Linkins	Her Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022