

Inspection of Unique Children's School

1a Dukes Avenue, N10 2PS

Inspection dates: 24 to 26 May 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Staff work hard to make all pupils feel welcome when they join the school. They prioritise helping pupils to regain their confidence and to successfully re-engage in education.

Leaders have high expectations for pupils' well-being. They make sure that pupils receive personalised support. Leaders also ensure that staff have all the information they need to work with pupils and meet their needs. As a result, staff work well together to meet pupils' needs and to help manage their emotional well-being. Pupils' attendance and behaviour significantly improve during their time at this school.

Pupils feel happy and are safe. They said that adults make sure that bullying does not happen. Pupils are confident that adults are there for them and deal with any concerns quickly. Parents and carers said that their children are given lots of support and guidance.

There are weaknesses in the school's curriculum. Leaders have not set out the knowledge and skills they want pupils to learn. Some adults do not use assessment well. These weaknesses mean that pupils do not learn the curriculum as well as they should.

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

Staff know pupils well, including their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff use information from external agencies and therapists to help develop a personalised curriculum for each pupil. Leaders have put a broad curriculum in place. The range of subjects that each pupil studies increases during their time at the school. This reflects the school's initial focus on prioritising pupils' well-being as they re-engage with education. Local authorities that enrol pupils at the school speak positively about the school's work in supporting pupils to enjoy learning again.

Pupils have large gaps in their learning when they arrive at the school. Leaders are not clear enough about how the curriculum for each pupil will fill these gaps. Leaders' curriculum thinking is too vague. They have not clearly identified the most important knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn across all subjects. They have not identified the various ways that they could assess pupils' achievements. As a result, teaching, including for pupils with SEND, is not as helpful as it should be in enabling pupils to know more and remember more over time. The school's schemes of work do not meet the requirements of the independent school standards (the standards).

Some learning activities do not help pupils to make connections with previous learning. This is because adults working with pupils sometimes focus too much on the task itself rather than the knowledge that pupils need to know and remember from doing the task. Sometimes, adults do not check carefully whether pupils learn what they want them to. They do not give enough emphasis to important subject vocabulary.

Pupils are typically reluctant readers and writers. Staff plan opportunities for pupils to read and write in English. However, pupils do not get plentiful opportunities to read and write in other subjects. This is holding pupils back from becoming more fluent readers and accurate writers.

Staff implement strategies that help pupils with their social and emotional needs. These strategies reflect advice and guidance from the school's therapist. Staff treat all pupils with respect and dignity. Pupils behave well and develop positive attitudes to learning. They are polite and friendly to all staff.

Leaders place a strong focus on supporting pupils' broader personal development. This focus includes offering trips and other learning experiences. Some of these are specific to individual pupils, for example in relation to a career or interest. The school has a strong sense of family. Pupils come together with staff to share experiences and to take part in different events. Pupils learn about different cultures, for example through cooking, newspaper articles and current affairs.

There are no coherent policy or curriculum plans for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. There is no school policy for careers education as required by the standards. Leaders help pupils to prepare for adulthood and to learn about relationships. Pupils are informed about possible careers, and how to manage conflict and take care of their own health. Leaders are unaware of, and therefore have not followed, statutory guidance about relationships and sex education (RSE). They are also unaware of the Department for Education (DfE) guidance on the content of RSE. While they are teaching PSHE, leaders do not check that they the full content is covered.

Leaders ensure that tolerance and respect towards other pupils and staff, for example in relation to race, religion and beliefs is encouraged. Leaders do not tolerate any discrimination of any kind. However, they have not given as much thought to how they teach about the full range of protected characteristics in the curriculum. They have not ensured that all protected characteristics are referenced in school documentation and respect for them encouraged in line with the requirements of the standards.

Leaders at all levels have not ensured that they understand the requirements of the standards. They do not use the DfE's guidance on the standards (April 2019) carefully. Leaders have not written and implemented required policies such as those for curriculum, careers, RSE and risk assessment. The admissions and attendance registers do not meet requirements. Consequently, there are more unmet standards at this inspection than at the last inspection.

Leaders consider staff when making decisions. They provide time for staff to talk about their own well-being in regular supervision sessions. However, the headteacher has a heavy teaching commitment and has no external support. The proprietor has recently appointed a governing body. The contact details have not been included in school documentation as required. Members of the governing body bring much-needed skills and experience. The new chair of the governing body has identified the right priorities

to move the school forward. This includes plans to explore much-needed support for the headteacher and to review school policies.

The school has not prepared an accessibility plan in line with Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Above all else, staff prioritise making sure that pupils feel safe, secure and happy. Staff regularly share information about pupils, for example giving updates on safeguarding concerns and on the therapeutic approaches that everyone should be using. This helps ensure that everyone knows each pupil's specific needs and can respond in the same way. Staff liaise with external agencies quickly should there be any concerns that need to be followed up.

While leaders keep pupils safe and well on a day-to-day basis, they have not ensured that the school's safeguarding policy reflects the requirements of the latest statutory guidance. The school's policy is readily available on request.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Leaders' curriculum thinking is vague. Their approach to the curriculum has not been set out in a coherent policy. Their curriculum thinking does not make clear what they want pupils to know and remember. As a result, gaps in pupils' learning are not being addressed securely. Leaders should review their planning for each subject. They should identify the precise content and vocabulary that they want pupils to know and remember.
- Staff do not use assessment routinely well. They do not check systematically that pupils know more and remember more over time. Sometimes, they do not check and reinforce important subject vocabulary that pupils should know and use. Leaders need to review how they capture pupils' achievements and how they assess how well pupils learn.
- Pupils have opportunities to read and write in their functional English course. However, leaders do not have a sharp enough focus on helping pupils to practise reading and writing across different subjects. Leaders need to make sure that pupils develop their reading and writing across different subjects.
- While leaders are delivering PSHE sessions, they are not aware of statutory guidance with regard to RSE. They have not met the requirements of RSE in relation to pupils' personal development. Leaders must draft a policy, and develop a cohesive curriculum plan, and consult parents as required. Leaders then need to finalise and implement their policy, and make it available on request.
- There are more unmet standards at this inspection than the last inspection. Leaders have not been rigorous in understanding the requirements of the standards. This

includes the content of school policies such as those for safeguarding and curriculum. Leaders need to make sure that they pay due regard to DfE guidance on the standards. They must stay up to date with any changes to requirements. Leaders need to review their policies, ensuring they adhere to the standards and statutory guidance such as 'Keeping children safe in education'.

- Members of the newly appointed governing body have the background knowledge and skills needed to fulfil their duties. They have identified some important priorities. Leaders need to prepare a comprehensive improvement plan to tackle the school's weaknesses. Members of the governing body should use this to hold leaders to account for the quality of their work.
- The headteacher has a heavy teaching commitment. This is a view shared by the chair of the governing body. This is leading to a heavy workload and compromises the headteacher's strategic ability to make improvements. The proprietor and governing body need to review the workload of and support for the headteacher.

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

Unique reference number	145295
DfE registration number	309/6006
Local authority	Haringey
Inspection number	10226759
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	Less than 5
Number of part-time pupils	1
Proprietor	Hinal Patel
Headteacher	Alex Dimou
Annual fees (day pupils)	£31,200
Telephone number	020 8292 3060
Website	None
Email address	alex.dimou@uniquechildrenshome.org
Date of previous inspection	8 to 10 July 2019

Information about this school

- Unique Children's school is a small independent school in Haringey.
- Pupils are placed at the school from a range of local authorities.
- Pupils often join the school after long periods of being out of education.
- Some pupils have an education, health and care plan. All pupils have a range of complex needs, such as social, emotional and mental health difficulties.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school had its last standard inspection in July 2019 when it was judged to require improvement. At the last inspection not all the independent school standards were met.
- The governing body has recently been appointed. The first formal meeting took place in May 2022.

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 has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- This was the first routine inspection since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the proprietor, the chair of the governing body and other senior staff.
- The inspector also spoke with representatives from different local authorities to discuss safeguarding, the quality of education and support being provided to pupils.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics and cooking. For each deep dive the inspector 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 inspector also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- The inspector met with a variety of staff to discuss safeguarding, behaviour and support for pupils' well-being. The inspector reviewed a variety of documentation, including pre-employment checks on staff, policies and risk assessments. The inspector considered the views of parents, pupils and other agencies to help evaluate the culture of safeguarding at the school.

- The inspector reviewed a wide range of policies and other evidence to evaluate compliance with the standards.
- The inspector did not, due to its size, make a separate judgement on the sixth form. However, evidence for the sixth form was included in evaluating evidence for each of the judgement areas.

Inspection team

Sam Hainey, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
 - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work–
 - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan; and
 - 2(1)(b)(ii) do not undermine the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are–
 - 2(2)(a) full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age (construed in accordance with section 8 of the Education Act 1996), which gives pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education
 - 2(2)(b) that pupils acquire speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills
 - 2(2)(d) personal, social, health and economic education which–
 - 2(2)(d)(i) reflects the school's aim and ethos; and
 - 2(2)(d)(ii) encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act
 - 2(2)(e) for pupils receiving secondary education, access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that–
 - 2(2)(e)(i) is presented in an impartial manner
 - 2(2)(e)(ii) enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options; and
 - 2(2)(e)(iii) helps them to encourage their potential.
- 2A(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor–
 - 2A(1)(b) ensures that every registered pupil who is provided with secondary education at the school is provided with relationships and sex education, except in so far as the pupil is excused as mentioned in sub-paragraph (2)
 - 2A(1)(d) in making arrangements for the purposes of paragraphs (a), (b) or (c), has regard to any guidance under section 80A of the Education Act 2002 that applies in relation to the provision of education by maintained schools
 - 2A(1)(e) makes and keeps up to date a separate written statement of its policy with regard to the provision of education as required by each of paragraphs (a) and (b)
 - 2A(1)(f) consults parents of registered pupils at the school before making or revising a statement under sub-paragraph (e), and
 - 2A(1)(g) publishes a copy of the statement on a website and provides a copy of the statement free of charge to anyone who asks for one.
- 2A(2) Arrangements made by the proprietor for the purposes of sub-paragraph (1)(b) must ensure that where a pupil's parent requests that the pupil is wholly or

partly excused from sex education provided as part of relationships and sex education, the pupil is so excused until the request is withdrawn, unless or to the extent that the head teacher considers that the pupil should not be so excused.

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 5 The standard about the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school is met if the proprietor–
 - 5(b) ensures that principles are actively promoted which–
 - 5(b)(vi) encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 15 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that an admission and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy.

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)(a) the information specified in sub-paragraph (2) is provided to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate
 - 32(1)(b) the information specified in sub-paragraph (3) is made available to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate
- 32(2) The information specified in this sub-paragraph is–
 - 32(2)(c) where there is a governing body, the name and address for correspondence of its Chair
- 32(3) The information specified in this sub-paragraph is–
 - 32(3)(c) particulars of the policy referred to in paragraph 2.

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.
- 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The school has not drawn up an accessibility plan.

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