

Inspection of Unity Primary Academy

Hickory Avenue, Greenstead, Colchester, Essex CO4 3QJ

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 March 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils benefit from leaders' commitment to 'giving every child every chance, every day' at this school. They enjoy a wide range of opportunities to enrich their lives and widen their horizons. Pupils visit local places of interest, such as Colchester Castle. They also travel further afield, visiting the Houses of Parliament or singing at The O2 arena. Pupils also delight in the memorable opportunities brought into school, such as a visiting circus.

Young children play kindly together in Nursery, learning to take turns. Older pupils encourage each other. At breaktimes, older and younger children mix happily together. Pupils understand what bullying is and why it is wrong. It happens sometimes. Pupils trust their teachers to ensure it stops.

Pupils know that leaders expect them to behave well. They like the system 'Moving on up' each day. Most pupils behave well in lessons, but this is not consistent across the school. Sometimes, pupils do not pay attention or are distracted by the behaviour of others. When this happens, pupils do not learn as well as they could.

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

Leaders have planned an ambitious curriculum for pupils. This starts in the early years and is planned to ensure that pupils are ready for the next step in their learning. Where subject leaders support teachers with how to put plans in place, pupils are well supported and learn well. This is not consistent across the whole curriculum.

In some subjects, teachers regularly check what pupils already know and whether they understand new ideas. They explain new vocabulary clearly. They teach new skills in small steps and make sure pupils get plenty of practice before moving on. In these subjects, pupils are knowledgeable and enthusiastic.

Where the curriculum is taught less well, teachers do not have the expertise to adjust lessons to meet the needs of pupils. Teachers do not explain new ideas clearly enough for pupils to understand or apply them independently. In these subjects, pupils' written work does not match what they are capable of. Many older pupils have gaps in their learning and are not achieving as well as they should.

Staff have the training they need to teach phonics well. Decodable books give children lots of practice in their reading. Regular checks are in place to make sure pupils are developing the reading knowledge and skills they need. Adults provide extra help for pupils who fall behind to help them catch up.

Older pupils can choose from carefully selected books to build their skills. In lessons, teachers introduce pupils to ambitious texts. However, some older pupils have not learned to read well and fluently due to gaps in the previous reading curriculum.

Leaders seek out and act on the advice of external professionals to meet the needs of pupils with the most complex special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). In the early years, leaders are quick to spot any difficulties and put extra help in place. However, as pupils get older, teachers are not planning precisely enough for the needs of pupils with SEND. They do not check how these pupils are faring and adapt their teaching accordingly.

Pupils understand the behaviour management system. Staff feel well supported by leaders to put this in place. Children in the early years behave well. Where teachers enable pupils to succeed and manage behaviour well, pupils join in lessons with enthusiasm. This is not consistent across the school. In some lessons, teachers do not spot, or address, poor behaviour. When this happens, a few pupils disturb the learning of others.

Pupils learn about healthy lifestyles, from the early years. Throughout the school, pupils learn about respectful, positive relationships. They learn about diversity and tolerance for others. They know why this is important. Pupils can take part in a wide range of clubs and trips to develop their strengths and interests.

Leaders provide strong, caring pastoral support for pupils and their families. There is good provision for pupils who need help to manage their feelings. This starts in the early years, where children learn to take turns and share equipment kindly. Leaders are vigorously tackling the poor attendance of a few pupils to ensure they can benefit from the opportunities in school.

Staff and many parents are appreciative of the efforts made by current leaders to support their well-being. Staff and governors feel involved in the improvement journey of the school and understand the role they can play in this. Leaders in the trust are providing practical support to leaders as they continue to address challenges in improving learning and behaviour.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Well-trained staff understand the signs of safeguarding concerns and know how to report these.

Leaders secure extra help for vulnerable families. They seek and follow external advice and work with appropriate external agencies to keep pupils safe.

Governors and the trust check that agreed processes are in place and that appropriate pre-employment checks are in place and recorded accurately for staff.

Pupils learn to stay safe online and outside school through the carefully planned curriculum.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers have varying levels of expertise to deliver the planned curriculum. Where teachers' subject knowledge and teaching skills are not well developed, pupils are not well supported to learn and achieve as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that all teachers have sufficient expertise to put in place, assess and adjust lessons so they are well matched to the needs of their learners.
- Provision for pupils with SEND is not consistently well matched to need. Some plans do not specify what pupils need to learn or do next. Teachers do not always adapt their teaching to best support these pupils' learning. As a result, some pupils with SEND are not accessing the curriculum or developing well. Leaders should ensure that teachers use well-chosen strategies and adapt their teaching to ensure that pupils with SEND learn and develop well.
- Some subject leaders do not review how well subjects are being taught. They are not strengthening teaching where it is required. Leaders should continue to build the capacity and expertise of subject leaders to ensure that the curriculum is adapted to meet the needs of all learners and that teachers have the expertise to implement the curriculum as intended.
- Systems to address poor behaviour and to engage and motivate learners are developing. Where they are not implemented consistently, pupils do not achieve well, and distract others. Leaders should ensure that the agreed behaviour system is consistently in place and that behavioural difficulties are addressed quickly and effectively.

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.

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	141113
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10255060
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	392
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Gavin Robert
Headteacher	Pieter Labuschagne
Website	unityprimaryacademy.com
Dates of previous inspection	12 and 13 July 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Leaders use one registered provider of off-site alternative education.
- Leaders provide on-site before-school care.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received 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.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, physical education and art. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- The inspectors met with school leaders, including representatives of the local governing board and the trust.
- The inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation during the inspection, including the school development plan, and safeguarding and behaviour records.
- The inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead and other staff to discuss safeguarding.
- The inspectors considered 40 responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including 25 free-text comments. They also considered 22 responses to the staff survey and 91 responses to the pupil survey.
- The inspectors spoke to groups of pupils about their experiences of school life and their learning in lessons to understand what it is like to be a pupil at this school. They also observed the behaviour of pupils at breaktimes and around the school.

Inspection team

Lynne Williams, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Nicola Shadbolt

Ofsted Inspector

Stephen Cloke

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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