

# Unity College

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

**Inspection date**

13 April 2023

**Overall outcome**

**The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school provision is implemented**

## Main inspection findings

### Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

*Paragraphs 7, 11–12, 14, 16–16(b), 32(1), 32(1)(c)*

- An up-to-date safeguarding policy is published on the school's website. It pays close attention to statutory guidance and local safeguarding arrangements. The proprietor has also taken care to ensure that it is relevant to the school's context. This detail includes, for example, correct procedures in various situations, who to contact and how to do so. The policy also includes a section detailing intelligence about the specific safeguarding risks in the area and the school's response to try to counter these.
- In previous inspections, safeguarding has been judged to be effective and the associated independent school standards (the standards) have been met.
- Staff training continues to be kept up to date. It is regularly refreshed with sessions that focus on specific areas. The proprietor ensures that there is a thorough induction process and that new staff are suitably trained in safeguarding before they have contact with pupils. Safeguarding records show a clear recording of concerns, prompt action by staff and leaders and proactive communication with a range of other safeguarding partners.
- Leaders have established robust fire safety procedures in partnership with external specialist assessors. Through a thorough annual risk assessment process, leaders ensure that there is no complacency. Any steps that can further enhance safe practice are identified and prompt action taken.
- Supervision of pupils is likely to continue to more than meet requirements with the proposed expansion of capacity. There is a high ratio of adults to pupils which may be further adjusted according to individual need and risk assessment.
- The proprietor has ensured that the required health, safety and risk assessment policies are in place. These policies reference the relevant legislation. They clearly state important aspects such as different partners' responsibilities, as well as setting out arrangements for staff training and the monitoring of the policies.
- The risk assessment policy sets out a clear framework for identifying, assessing and

managing risk. Risk assessments are thoughtful, detailed and fit for purpose. Leaders are clear about how they would adapt the school's routines and arrangements for an increased number of pupils on site.

- Leaders have ensured that all paragraphs that were checked in this part are likely to continue to be met.

#### Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

*Paragraphs 18(2)–18(2)(e), 18(3), 19(2)–19(2)(d)(ii), 19(3), 21(1)–21(3)(b), 21(5)–21(5)(c)*

- The school continues to carry out the required checks of the suitability of adults before they start. The single central record of these checks is maintained and complete. Although the proprietor's human resources department carries out these checks, the headteacher is knowledgeable about the different types of checks and safer recruitment processes. This enables him to oversee this important record and its completeness.
- The proprietor has ensured that all requirements of this part are likely to continue to be met.

#### Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

*Paragraphs 23(1)–24(1)(b), 24(2)–29(1)(b)*

- The proprietor's approach is to ensure that there is a potential school place at Unity College for every young person placed in one of its associated residential homes. Consequently, as residential capacity is set to expand, the proprietor has requested a corresponding change to the school's registration. Due to this specific model, the school has always operated well within its maximum capacity.
- Through all previous inspections, the requirements of this part have been met. The proprietor does not propose any additional accommodation and has not identified the need to carry out any building works for this potential expansion. Leaders' plans show how they could accommodate every young resident within the current school premises across the main and satellite sites. This can likely be achieved without repurposing communal spaces in the school such as the hall.
- Leaders have identified sensible adaptations they would make to daily operations should the school ever be at, or approaching, capacity. This would include, for example, staggering the use of certain common areas at the main site, including the hall and outdoor space.
- Current pupil toilets still exceed recommended ratios for the proposed increased number of pupils. There is likely to continue to be sufficient access to clearly labelled sources of drinking water.
- Both sites have small, secure and functional outdoor spaces for recreation. The proprietor has plans to further develop available outdoor space at the main site with seating areas and an 'outdoor classroom'. Physical education is provided off site, although the main school site also has a shower.
- Leaders have ensured that all the standards contained in this part are likely to continue to be met.

## Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

### *Paragraph 34(1)–34(1)(c)*

- The school has a well-established track record of meeting the standards and providing a good quality of education.
- There is a clear accountability structure in place, including a regional manager and governing body. The regional manager, who is part of the governing body, acts in a 'support and challenge' role. This oversight is focused partly on compliance but includes flexibility to be able to respond to the school's particular strengths and needs. There is an established reporting structure from the headteacher to the governing body, which meets termly.
- The proprietor has recently developed 'trackers' for ensuring that the standards and all associated guidance are continually met. Aiming to strengthen monitoring arrangements, part of this has also been about ensuring that headteachers and other school leaders have suitable knowledge and understanding of the standards.
- The headteacher is proactive in ensuring that he continues to develop professionally, does not become isolated and learns from practice elsewhere.
- The proprietor has ensured that it is likely that the standard in this part would continue to be met.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The school is likely to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that are relevant to the material change.

## School details

Unique reference number	136373
DfE registration number	825/6043
Inspection number	10282273

This inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards relevant to the material change that the school has applied to make.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	Keys Group
Chair	David Manson
Headteacher	Martin Dyer
Annual fees (day pupils)	£36,400
Telephone number	01494 446371
Website	<a href="https://education.keyschildren.co.uk/school/unity-school/">https://education.keyschildren.co.uk/school/unity-school/</a>
Email address	admin.unitycollege@keys-group.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	8 to 10 February 2022

## Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	11 to 18	Not applicable	Not applicable
Number of pupils on the school roll	13 (Capacity 26)	36	36

## Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed

Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	13	36
Number of part-time pupils	None	None
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	13	36
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	8	36
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	13	36

## Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	8	11
Number of part-time teaching staff	None	None

## Information about this school

- Unity College provides full-time education for pupils requiring support with social, emotional and mental health issues. The school is run under a contractual arrangement with the Thames Valley Cross Regional Project (the project). This is a partnership of six local authorities that places and funds the pupils at the school. The school opened and first admitted pupils in January 2011.
- All pupils are accommodated in residential homes that are part of the project and operated by the school's proprietor, Keys Group. The proprietor is seeking to ensure that there is a school place at Unity College available for every young person the project accommodates. In practice, a number of the young residents attend school elsewhere. Consequently, the school has never been full, usually operating well within its existing capacity.
- All pupils have experienced significant difficulties and disruption to their education. The majority have education, health and care plans.
- As well as the registered school site, the school operates a satellite site approximately 20 miles away in the grounds of one of the project's residential homes.

- The school currently uses three alternative provisions, none of which are registered as independent schools.
- The school's previous standard inspection was in February 2022.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education to consider the proprietor's request for a material change to the school's registration. The proprietor wishes to increase the maximum number of pupils on roll from 26 to 36.
- This was the school's first inspection in relation to this proposed change.
- The inspector discussed the proposed changes with the headteacher and a representative of the proprietor. The school was not open to pupils on the day of the inspection and no other staff were present. The inspector toured both the school's main and satellite premises. He reviewed a range of records and documents related to the safety and welfare of pupils to consider the school's capacity for the proposed expansion.

## Inspection team

Clive Dunn, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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