

# Inspection of Unity College

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

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Inspection dates: 8 to 10 July 2025

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

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?**

Many pupils arrive at Unity College having missed substantial periods of education in previous settings. Now, they enjoy attending school because staff create a safe and welcoming environment. Pupils know staff care about them deeply. They build trusting relationships with staff. This helps pupils stay focused on learning.

The school's approach to developing pupil's personal development is exceptional. Staff create meticulously planned learning opportunities beyond the academic curriculum, which strengthen the school's wider offer. For example, pupils actively take part in 'Monday fundays' and 'community days'. Adventurous challenges inspire pupils to build resilience and practise essential personal and social skills, such as cooperation and collaboration. Pupils learn to build trust through activities such as archery and high ropes.

Staff set high standards and expect pupils behave well, which they do most of the time. Teachers set high expectations for all pupils. Pupils are aware of this, and it often motivates them to try and meet those standards. When pupils do not meet the school's high expectations of behaviour, staff respond sensitively and effectively.

Most pupils have education, health and care (EHC) plans, which outline how their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) should be met. Staff work with determination to prepare every pupil for the next stage of their education.

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

The school has experienced a period of change in some leadership posts since the last inspection, including in the senior team. This has brought about a renewed focus on improving the curriculum. Two distinct curriculum pathways enable pupils to achieve success according to their starting points, putting the pupils' needs first. The formal curriculum follows the national curriculum closely, this includes supporting pupils to enter academic qualifications. The informal curriculum takes a more vocational approach, with relevant qualifications accessible to all. In some areas of the curriculum, the school's own improvements are relatively new and not yet embedded. This means that some pupils do not learn as well as they could.

The broad and balanced curriculum is carefully matched to pupils' needs. Pupils' EHC plan targets provide the starting points for teachers to adapt the curriculum and support pupils' own individual needs. Staff are experts in the subjects that they teach. They use a range of strategies to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills. This helps them tailor the curriculum to suit pupils' individual needs. All pupils achieve some form of recognised qualification. Some pupils achieve GCSEs in English and mathematics, despite joining the school with low achievement previously.

There is a strong focus on reading for pleasure. Those pupils who need support at the earlier stages of learning to read receive bespoke tailored instruction. This ensures that they catch up quickly.

Typically, pupils demonstrate respect for each other and staff most of the time. Attendance at school is improving slowly. Some pupils find attending lessons extremely challenging and risk falling further behind. However, the school provides substantial support to re-engage pupils and encourage them back into the classroom.

The school's detailed approach to developing pupils' personal development is underpinned by a comprehensive personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum. Skilled staff deliver the curriculum expertly, tailoring it precisely to meet the individual needs of every pupil. Careers education is well structured and ensures that all pupils successfully move on to appropriate next steps in education, employment or training. External visitors inform pupils about a wide range of topics, for example from the police and careers service. Opportunities to develop social skills and cultural knowledge and skills abound. The school meticulously tracks pupils' engagement and ensures that everyone participates in these vital learning opportunities meaningfully.

The proprietary body and senior school leaders share an ambitious vision for all pupils. They publish all relevant information, such as the school's safeguarding policy, on the school's website to keep stakeholders well informed. The proprietor maintains supportive and rigorous oversight of the school. The school's statutory duties, including compliance with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, are carried out effectively. The proprietary body equips the school with sufficient knowledge and resources needed to meet the independent school standards in full. Staff work collaboratively and are proud to work at the school. They know that their workload is considered when improvements are made and this enables them to carry out their roles as effectively as possible and motivates them to do their best for pupils. One parent commented that, 'the staff are very dedicated and always put the needs of the children first'.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)**

- The school's recent refinements to the curriculum are not yet fully embedded. As a result, in some subjects, teachers' subject-specific pedagogical knowledge and skills are not as consistently strong as they could be. The school should continue to ensure it supports staff to deliver the curriculum consistently well and improve teaching to ensure that all pupils achieve highly.

## 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.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136373
<b>DfE registration number</b>	825/6043
<b>Local authority</b>	Buckinghamshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10342073
<b>Type of school</b>	Other Independent Special School
<b>School category</b>	Independent 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>	13
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Keys BR Limited
<b>Chair</b>	David Manson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Louise Reeks
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£40,040
<b>Telephone number</b>	01494 446371
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.keyschildren.co.uk/schools/unity-college">www.keyschildren.co.uk/schools/unity-college</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:admin.unitycollege@keys-group.co.uk">admin.unitycollege@keys-group.co.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	8 to 10 February 2022

## 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 four 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 seeks to ensure that there is a school place at Unity College available for every young person that the project accommodates. In practice, some 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.
- The school is located at 150 West Wycombe Road, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire HP12 3AE. In addition, the school operates a satellite site at: Unity Roots, Hunters Farm Industrial Estate, Fleet Marston, HP18 0QT.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provision and sends one pupil to a provision which is part of the Keys Group.

## 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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher and leaders from the proprietor body, including the executive headteacher, the education director and the assistant education director.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, science and PSHE. They also considered pathway two, the semi-formal curriculum, as part of their consideration of the quality of education. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited

a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during social times and spoke to some pupils to gather their views about the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first. One of the inspectors visited this additional site as part of the inspection, and considered the safeguarding arrangements at this site.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff and pupils during discussions and through staff's responses to Ofsted's survey.
- Inspectors took account of parents' responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including parents' free-text comments.

### **Inspection team**

Linda Culling, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Charlotte Wilson

Ofsted Inspector

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