

Inspection of Urban Mission School

1 Cornmill Lane, Elmira Street, Lewisham, London SE13 7FY

Inspection dates: 1 to 3 July 2025

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

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?

Pupils enjoy their time at this welcoming and friendly school. Staff quickly get to know pupils' backgrounds, experiences and needs. They help pupils to settle in and overcome any barriers to learning. Pupils have positive relationships with staff. They are well cared for and safe. They know who to go to if they have a concern. Pupils are confident that they will be listened to, and any worries that they may have will be taken seriously.

The school's clear expectations of pupils' behaviour are well understood. Staff are patient with pupils, giving them time and guidance to express themselves. They help pupils to follow familiar routines. This supports pupils to behave well and focus on learning.

The school is ambitious for pupils' future lives, including their next steps in education, employment or training. Staff focus on ensuring that pupils are successful in their learning. They support pupils to recognise and build on their strengths. Pupils leave the school well prepared for their future lives. They enjoy personal and academic success during their time at the school.

Pupils make a positive contribution to the life of the school and to the wider community. For example, pupils help to prepare snacks for their peers and take part in setting out items for the school's community food bank.

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

The school has devised a curriculum which supports pupils to develop personal skills alongside gaining qualifications to prepare them for the next steps in their education. For instance, pupils learn about managing a budget. They receive quality guidance about further education, employment and training. In Year 10, they undertake a well-planned programme of work experience.

The curriculum has been designed to include a range of subjects. The school has planned content in a sensible order so that pupils can revisit important ideas and build on what they know. For example, in art, pupils learned first about the style and importance of Sonia Delaunay's artwork in 1900s Europe. They consider these ideas when comparing her work to that of contemporary artist, Lakwena, and identifying some similar approaches and style. There are a few areas of the curriculum, however, where the school has not identified all of the knowledge that pupils should learn. Where this is the case, pupils learn more general ideas within some subjects, but not about more detailed concepts and vocabulary. This limits opportunities for pupils to deepen their knowledge in some areas of the curriculum, particularly in Years 10 and 11.

The curriculum emphasises the development of pupils' literacy and mathematical knowledge. This ensures pupils secure firm foundations to help them to be successful in the wider curriculum. For instance, pupils read a range of good-quality

literature. They are well supported to understand the texts that they read, including any new language they come across. The school provides pupils with dedicated reading time and a school library which provides a range of interesting books. When they arrive at the school, teachers check whether pupils need any support to strengthen their reading skills. Pupils receive plenty of additional support and practice with reading. They read accurately and with fluency across the curriculum.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge. They present important concepts in ways pupils find manageable to understand. They revisit key ideas to help pupils deepen their knowledge and remember them well. Teachers check pupils' understanding and address misconceptions where required.

All pupils who attend the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The majority have an education, health and care plan in place before they arrive at the school. Pupils' individual needs are well considered and staff make well-placed adjustments to teaching and resources. Pupils develop confidence and independence as a result of the support they receive.

The school places particular importance on pupils' personal development. Pupils are taught extensively about healthy relationships and staying safe online. They are supported to broaden their understanding of tolerance and respect. For example, pupils visit different places of worship to appreciate different people's beliefs. They learn about their rights and responsibilities in society.

Behaviour is calm and orderly. Pupils do not cause disruption to one another. Staff help pupils to identify and communicate their needs. This helps to promote pupils making responsible choices about their behaviour. Staff resolve any issues quickly. This ensures that pupils can concentrate on their learning and succeed.

The school follows up on absences swiftly. For example, staff work closely with external agencies and pupils' families to overcome barriers to pupils' regular attendance.

Pupils enjoy opportunities for extra-curricular activities. For instance, they enjoy an outing to a theme park with their school. They value educational visits to a gallery and a museum, as well as sporting experiences, such as swimming and golf. However, these opportunities are less regular than they might be, which limits opportunities to develop pupils' talents and interests.

Staff are positive about working at this school. Their well-being and workload are considered by leaders, who take steps to help them manage any pressures. Leaders provide ongoing training to develop the practice and expertise of staff. Parents and carers appreciate the strong communication between the school and parents. They recognise the positive impact of the school's work on pupils' experiences in education.

The school meets all the independent school standards and fulfils the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. Leaders show that they have both the capability and capacity to meet the independent school standards over time.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- In some areas of the curriculum, the school has not identified all of the component knowledge it expects pupils to learn, particularly for older pupils. This means that there is not clear guidance to staff about how to build on pupils' prior knowledge in some subjects and it risks limiting what pupils may achieve. The proprietor should ensure that the school's curriculum is sequenced towards cumulatively sufficient knowledge and skills for future learning and success.
- The opportunities that the school provides to nurture, develop and stretch pupils' talents and interests are not as wide as they might be. This limits pupils' experience and opportunities beyond the curriculum in areas where they have particular interests. The proprietor should ensure that there is a broad offer to develop pupils' talents and interests.

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

Unique reference number	143838
DfE registration number	209/6002
Local authority	Lewisham
Inspection number	10375110
Type of school	Other Independent School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	11
Proprietor	Efrem Buckle
Chair	Efrem Buckle
Headteacher	Linda Ughere
Annual fees	£28,130.70 to £36,569.91
Telephone number	0208 318 6133
Website	www.umschool.uk
Email address	info@umsc.uk
Dates of previous inspection	5 to 7 July 2022

Information about this school

- Urban Mission is an independent school and alternative provider in the London Borough of Lewisham. It has a registered capacity of 18 places for boys and girls aged 11 to 16.
- Pupils attend full time. Some attend for short periods while remaining on the roll of their mainstream school.
- The school's previous standard inspection took place in July 2022.
- The school does not make use of any alternative providers of education.
- The school was part of the nationwide TLG charity. It became Urban Mission from January 2022.
- The school is run in partnership with Ecclesia Church. It has a Christian ethos. The school is located within the church's buildings but has sole use of these when in operation.
- The school caters for pupils with special educational needs, particularly pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs, and speech, language and communication needs.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the proprietor, a member of the governing council, the headteacher and other senior leaders.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: art, mathematics, English, and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, 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. Inspectors also visited a sample of lessons and reviewed pupils' work in other subjects.
- 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.

- To check for compliance with the independent school standards, inspectors carried out checks on health and safety documentation, including fire safety and risk assessments, and checked the maintenance quality of the school site.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils by speaking to pupils in lessons and speaking to unaccompanied groups of pupils.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents who responded to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View. They also held discussions with some parents by telephone.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff through meetings with both teaching and non-teaching staff and responses to the Ofsted online staff survey.

Inspection team

Rebecca Iles-Smith, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Andrew Hook

Ofsted Inspector

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