

Inspection of Unity Academy Blackpool

Warbreck Hill Road, Blackpool, Lancashire FY2 0TS

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 July 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils enjoy attending this school. Staff know pupils well and this helps most pupils to feel safe. Pupils have trusted adults they can talk to and seek help and support from.

Leaders have high expectations for pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and plan experiences to raise pupils' aspirations. For example, pupils visit a university and leaders welcome visitors, such as engineers and architects. Leaders encourage all pupils to believe in the school motto 'In Unity we succeed'. However, the conduct of some pupils does not meet the expectations that leaders have for behaviour and learning.

Pupils told inspectors that bullying, including the use of discriminatory language, happens in school. Most pupils trust adults to deal with these incidents quickly and effectively. Leaders have taken steps to help pupils and parents to report cases of bullying more easily.

Pupils, parents and carers value the opportunities that pupils have to learn a musical instrument and to join the choir. Pupils enjoy watching and taking part in performances and concerts. Parents and pupils appreciate the impact that these experiences have on pupils' confidence and well-being. Pupils also have the opportunity to join the school scout group. During scout group, pupils of all ages participate in a range of activities, including outdoor pursuits.

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

Leaders have designed a curriculum to give all pupils, including those with SEND, the knowledge they need to succeed in life. However, in some subjects, including in the early years, leaders have not identified the essential knowledge that children and pupils need to learn and when they should learn it. This means that in these subjects, pupils do not build their knowledge over time in a logical way.

Leaders ensure that all pupils, including those with SEND, access the same curriculum as their friends. However, some pupils with SEND have not had those needs identified early enough to ensure that they are supported effectively across the curriculum. As a result, the behaviour of some pupils can be disruptive.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge in most subjects. They use their expertise to help pupils with their learning. They check pupils' understanding and address misconceptions. In these subjects, pupils can talk about their learning and remember previous knowledge. However, in some subjects, teachers do not receive the support they need from leaders to deliver the curriculum well. In these subjects, pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

Leaders have prioritised reading across the school. They act to ensure that all pupils value the importance of reading and become confident and fluent readers. For example, leaders recently held a reading festival for children, pupils, parents and members of the community. There is a sharp focus on early reading and developing children's speech and language from the early years. All staff delivering the phonics and reading curriculum have the knowledge and expertise to deliver it well. The books children and pupils take home to read match the sounds they know. Some children in the early years and pupils in the primary phase and key stage 3 struggle with reading. They are supported well to catch up. However, leaders do not check pupils' reading knowledge in key stage 4.

Some pupils and parents have concerns about pupils' behaviour across the school. Leaders have not ensured that staff have consistently high expectations for pupils' behaviour and conduct. This means that some lessons are disrupted by poor behaviour. There are also incidents of poor conduct during break times and while pupils move around the school. Leaders have established a specially resourced provision to support the behaviour of some key stage 3 and 4 pupils. This helps some pupils to manage their behaviour before returning to learn alongside their friends.

Leaders have planned opportunities for pupils beyond the academic curriculum. Children and pupils in the primary phase have a 'cultural passport'. This is designed to ensure that all pupils experience activities, such as planting a tree, baking a cake and a donkey ride before they complete the primary phase. Pupils across the school have the opportunity to become responsible and active citizens. For example, some pupils are prefects and reading buddies. Pupils learn about different faiths and cultures. Some pupils also have the opportunity to visit different places of worship.

However, some staff do not have the expertise to deliver crucial aspects of the personal development curriculum. This means that some pupils are not prepared well to be respectful of diversity and to take up their place in modern society.

Governors have an oversight of the school's priorities and the actions leaders are taking to improve the school. Staff feel supported by leaders. Staff said that their workload and well-being are considered and prioritised.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have provided training for staff to help them to identify pupils who may be at risk of harm. Leaders have systems in place for staff to report any concerns they may have. Leaders keep detailed records of safeguarding concerns and the actions they have taken. Leaders provide support in school and work with other agencies to provide additional help for vulnerable pupils.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online. For example, pupils are taught about the risks associated with drugs and alcohol and knife crime. They also learn about how to stay safe on the beach and by the sea.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, teachers are not clear about the essential knowledge that pupils, including children in the early years, should learn or the order in which it should be delivered. This means that some children and pupils are not able to build on prior learning. Leaders should ensure that they identify the essential knowledge for pupils and children to learn and the order in which it should be taught.
- In some subjects, leaders have not ensured that all teachers receive the support they need to deliver the curriculum well. As a result, some teachers do not have the knowledge and expertise they need to deliver the curriculum as effectively as they could. Leaders should ensure that all teachers are given support to deliver the curriculum confidently.
- Leaders have not ensured that all pupils with SEND benefit from appropriate support to access the curriculum successfully. Consequently, some pupils with SEND do not progress through the curriculum as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that access to the curriculum is adapted, so that pupils with SEND can learn well.
- Leaders have not ensured that staff have consistently high expectations for pupils' behaviour and conduct. As a result, some pupils misbehave in lessons, break times and around the school. Leaders should ensure that expectations for pupils' behaviour and conduct are understood and applied consistently by all staff.
- Leaders have not ensured that all staff have the knowledge and expertise to deliver crucial aspects of the personal development curriculum effectively. As a result, some pupils are not prepared well to be respectful citizens. Leaders should ensure that the personal development curriculum is delivered consistently well.

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 school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	139675
Local authority	Blackpool
Inspection number	10242236
Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	2 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	973
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Joel Arbour
Headteacher	Stephen Cooke
Website	www.unity.blackpool.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	3 and 4 October 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school is part of the Fylde Coast Academy Trust.
- Leaders make use of four registered alternative providers and one unregistered alternative provider.
- This school has a specially resourced provision for pupils in Years 7 to 11. There are 25 pupils on roll. Some of the pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Year 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- This school has provision for two-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) carried out this 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.
- Inspectors held meetings with the chair of the governing body, other governors, the chief executive officer of the trust and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors also met with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders and leaders for SEND. They also spoke with a range of staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, art and design, mathematics science, physical education and history. They visited a sample of lessons in these subjects, discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, reviewed pupils' and children's work and held discussions with teachers, children and pupils. Inspectors observed pupils reading to trusted adults.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their experiences of school and their views of behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' and children's behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentary evidence, including leaders' self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- Inspectors looked at safeguarding policies and reviewed leaders' records of checks on the suitability of staff and governors. They met with leaders who have overall responsibility for safeguarding. Inspectors spoke with staff and pupils about leaders' work to keep pupils safe.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered responses from the staff and pupils to Ofsted surveys.

Inspection team

Sally Timmons, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Alyson Middlemass	Ofsted Inspector
Sheila Iwaskow	Her Majesty's Inspector
Nick Lowry	Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022