

CHALLENGE PARTNERS: Quality Assurance Review Written Report

Name of School:	TBAP Unity Academy
School Address:	Almond Road St. Neots, Cambridgeshire PE19 1EA
Hub School:	London Special and AP provision

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Unique Reference Number:	142932
Local Authority:	Cambridgeshire
Type of School:	Special
School Category:	Sponsored Academy, opened in January 2017
Age range of pupils:	11-16
Number on roll:	51
Head teacher/Principal:	Jane Lancaster-Adlam

Date of last Ofsted inspection:	N/A
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	N/A

Date of Quality Assurance Review:	8-10 May 2017
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QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW – SUMMARY OF ESTIMATES¹

School Improvement Strategies:	Good
Outcomes for Pupils is:	Good
Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment:	Good
Area of Excellence:	Not submitted for this review

Overall Review Evaluation

The Quality Assurance Review found indicators that TBAP Unity Academy appears to be at the top of the Good grade and is working towards Outstanding.

1. Please note that a Challenge Partners Quality Assurance Review is not equivalent to an Ofsted inspection, and agreed estimates from the review are not equivalent to Ofsted judgements.

Information about the school

- Unity Academy is the only special school within the TBAP Multi-Academy Trust. It converted to a sponsored academy in July 2016 from a local authority special school called Trinity, based on three separate sites. The three sites have now combined into two, with a new purpose build site accommodating both the Foxton and Hartford sites. Unity Academy still uses the Wisbech site to cater for learners who live in the north of the county.
- All learners attending Unity Academy have an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) for social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) and their needs cannot be met in a mainstream setting.
- A new headteacher took up post in January 2017 when the new purpose built building opened. The school teams and leadership structure have been aligned to the TBAP model.
- Numbers on roll have increased since the opening of the new building in January 2017, with 9 referrals in the first month.
- Attendance has improved and the school has a six-term year.

School Improvement Strategies

What Went Well

- Within a relatively short space of time, the new headteacher has managed to create a cohesive staff team. They collectively share and implement the TBAP vision of high expectations for all learners. Although the school operates on two sites, the same school improvement strategies are employed across both due to effective leadership.
- There has been recognition on the part of the Trustees that, as the first special school within the Trust, some of their systems needed to be amended slightly in order to reflect the needs of the diverse cohort of learners. The format of the school day, the introduction of assemblies, a creative approach to the curriculum, more relevant accreditation and easily understood behaviour management systems, which learners have bought into, have helped them to demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. In addition, learners develop positive relationships with staff and their peers.
- The rich, nurturing environment and staff knowledge about individual learners have enabled a range of creative strategies to be implemented to promote learners' physical, emotional and social well being in a safe and supportive way.
- Rigorous and accurate baseline assessments have been introduced. These take into account and reflect the cognitive abilities of the learners so that an accurate picture of progress can be measured.

- Learner voice has been given a high profile and a School Council has been established. A head boy and head girl have been elected by the learners on both sites and they take their responsibilities very seriously.
- TBAP has a rigorous performance management system and this is currently being implemented at Unity. School improvement is very closely aligned to continuous professional development. A comprehensive training programme is in place for staff at all levels linked to both personal and professional needs.
- The new leadership structure is giving all staff opportunities to develop their leadership skills, as well as ensuring that the monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment is rigorous.
- Parents are involved in their child's learning by daily and weekly contact by a named member of staff. Termly home school visits have helped to establish a more consistent approach between home and school.
- The wellbeing of staff, as well as learners, has high priority and the daily debriefings contribute to this.

Even Better If...

...the new leadership structure was embedded fully so that everyone is clear of their roles and responsibilities in enabling the learners to achieve their full potential.

Pupil Outcomes

- A number of the learners attending Unity have had previous negative education experiences and many have only received home tutoring before being placed in the school. A major focus of the work at Unity is to create an environment where the pupils feel safe to make mistakes and to develop their self-confidence and self-esteem.
- Rigorous baseline procedures are in place to assess both academic attainment and social and emotional development so that the impact of bespoke interventions for each learner can be measured termly.
- Each learner is assigned a learning guide who will meet with parents on the first day of terms 1,3 and 5, usually in their home, to set both academic and non-academic targets during a 'structured conversation'. Learners are also involved in the process and targets are reviewed all together. Given their starting points, it is evident that many learners have made accelerated progress in a short space of time.
- The relationships with staff, built on mutual respect, are fundamental to the positive outcomes that learners achieve. Staff know learners extremely well and build on their strengths and interests to motivate and engage them in learning.

- All staff discuss each of the learners weekly to review progress and work is regularly moderated and levelled. National curriculum levels are currently still being used and TBAP have a working party to look at how their Pupil Asset Programme can be adapted to meet the specific needs of the learners at Unity.
- Parents and the learners are extremely positive about the school and say that the staff have helped them to believe in themselves as learners.
- All learners follow a broad curriculum and all subjects are accredited by national awarding bodies. Sport, business, hair and beauty, ICT and Jamie's food technology BTEC courses have recently been introduced. These have proved to be very motivating for the learners, giving them a sense of achievement and a desire to gain higher level qualifications. Accreditation through the English Speaking Board is also being introduced and this will enable learners to acquire a GCSE in English through speaking and listening and drama.
- Key Stage 4 learners benefit from work experience placements. The current Year 11 cohort is on track to achieve GCSE, Entry level, Functional Skills and BTEC qualifications.
- All current Year 11 learners have places in college and further education in September 2017.
- A thematic approach has been adopted at Key Stage 3. This supports the learners in using their literacy and numeracy skills across a range of subjects, as well as providing creative learning opportunities for all.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

What Went Well

- Learning environments consist of bright, supportive, learner friendly displays. Classrooms are well organised and resources easily accessible to the learners.
- A range of behaviour management strategies including humour, reward schemes, tactical ignoring, positive praise and peer support, ensure a safe, positive learning environment. This classroom climate enables learners to focus on tasks and participate well in well-planned and interesting tasks.
- Planning is detailed taking into account resources and individual learner needs, behaviour management styles and academic differentiation. This means that learners are motivated and challenged appropriately.
- Age appropriate tasks matched to ability, strong subject knowledge and an understanding of learners ensure appropriate challenge for all.
- Learning support practitioners (LSPs) are very effectively deployed in lessons and promote independence well. LSPs, as well as teachers, are assigned to an

individual learner as a learning guide in order to support and facilitate specific needs.

- Training has been provided for all staff in the use of the SOUND intervention and this is being implemented across all subjects. It has had a positive impact on learners' literacy and has helped to improve their spelling.
- Teachers use questioning effectively to check prior knowledge and to review and assess continually. This enables learners to be appropriately challenged.
- In all lessons observed, there were excellent examples of cross-curricular links; for example, in a food technology lesson, a learner was able to describe the scientific processes involved in making stock.
- A variety of strategies are used to support visual, kinaesthetic and auditory learners. For example, in a science lesson, a popular song was used effectively to help the learners remember scientific key words and, in an English lesson, phrases were highlighted in colour to help learners remember key facts.
- Learners are encouraged to be self reflective in assessing their understanding and to correct their own work, thus supporting them to become more independent learners.
- A variety of marking strategies are employed effectively through approaches such as 'Live Marking'. Guidance is followed well across both sites and gives learners constructive feedback and meaningful, relevant next steps.

Even Better If...

...all teachers adapted the pace of their lessons to reflect the time needed for some learners to process the questions they are asked and so maximise learning opportunities.

What additional support would the school like from the Challenge Partners network, either locally or nationally?

Following discussion with the headteacher, the school would like to reflect further about what support they might like.

This review will support the school's continuing improvement. The main findings will be shared within the school's hub in order that it can inform future activities.