

The United Learning Way Primary Academies

United Learning schools are characterised by the very highest expectations in all areas to bring out the best in everyone. Every child is special and capable of extraordinary things. Their limitless potential flourishes in a culture of hard work and kindness. Every adult working in every United Learning school acts with the utmost respect, care, and professionalism – the highest standards come with the greatest attention to the wellbeing of all. We strive for passionate teachers and use the quote by Robert Fried below as a benchmark for that success across every primary school in the trust.

‘Of some of our teachers, we remember the foibles and mannerisms, for others, their kindness and encouragement or their fierce devotion to standards of work that we probably did not share at that time. And of those who inspired us most, we remember what they cared about, and they cared about us, and the person we might become. It is the quality of caring about ideas and values, this fascination with the potential for growth within people, this depth and fervour and doing things well and striving for excellence, that comes closest to what I mean in describing a passionate teacher’

Best from Everyone

We work closely with our schools drawing upon effective collaboration to generate levels of trust that make support and challenge an integral part of our work at all levels across all primary schools. Active engagement with the improvement team and other leaders across the group results in the highest of expectations in all our schools. There are no glass ceilings on what can be achieved; we expect unreasonably so everyone can bring the best version of themselves.

Staff and leaders set high expectations for themselves. Staff are clear about what is expected of them and understand how they contribute to the success of the school. They model everything – from the way they speak, to the way they behave. They are professional in all they do and passionate about making a positive difference to pupils within their care.

Politeness and kindness matter and are taught through the school’s agreed curriculum. Pupils are aware of strategies to self-regulate which are aligned with provision for SEMH. All school staff respond to, rather than react to, behaviour issues, and every problem is seen and used as a learning opportunity.

Pupils move around their school in a calm manner. They hold doors open for visitors and ask how they are. They are kind, thoughtful, considerate, and able to hold a conversation on their own.

Regular focused CPD and subject networks develop teachers’ skills. As a result, children’s academic progress and achievement is of the highest priority throughout their time in the trust and we expect all schools to follow our common curriculum.

Classrooms are focused and energised. Teachers expect learning to be presented to a high standard and this is demonstrated in displays and pupils’ books. Pupils with additional needs that impact on the presentation of their work are supported to use assistive technology and the use of reasonable adjustment is well understood in all our schools to bring about the best in everyone.

Powerful Knowledge

Through our curriculum we empower pupils to understand and shape the world around them. Whatever their starting point, we ensure that every child is taken beyond their immediate experience. We have developed a shared United Learning primary curriculum that challenges pupils’ learning, deepens knowledge, and exposes them to a range of curriculum experiences.

Teachers are supported to deliver this through online resources, virtual CPD and subject networks. As a result of this active support, teachers have strong subject knowledge, know the requirements of curriculum sequencing, and use appropriate curriculum tasks, activities, and assessments. They are aware and plan for common misconceptions and sticking points in the curriculum content that they are teaching.

Whilst our curriculum puts an emphasis on the core teaching of maths and English, it also develops pupils as geographers, historians, artists, musicians, and athletes. The primary curriculum puts teachers in the driving seat. By planning lessons centrally, we enable teachers to plan lessons locally, playing to their own strengths and adapting materials for their local context and the needs of their pupils.

Reading is an integral part of any successful primary school and we believe strongly that the importance and joy of reading should be evident in all schools. Our schools are filled with books written by a wide range of different authors, matched to different year groups. They are read at every opportunity. Staff and pupils talk with enthusiasm about their favourite books and authors.

Our schools use synthetic phonics schemes, such as Read Write Inc, and a variety of appropriately matched books support reading experiences. All schools have a balanced reading approach and pupils read for pleasure regularly. Reading effectively and being exposed to thousands of words a week opens doors otherwise closed to many of our primary aged children. Fluent and frequent reading provides powerful knowledge for all.

Our curriculum ensures that teaching is appropriately sequenced. Teachers provide models, explore misconceptions, and provide dialogue which enriches pupil vocabulary. They use learning scaffolds to support pupils' acquisition of new concepts and knowledge. As an ongoing assessment tool, questioning is used alongside quality dialogue to promote the exploration of learning.

We support effective teaching with the appropriate use of classroom technology to enhance, deepen, and accelerate its key processes, such as modelling, assessment, and explanation. This support also reaches pupils, whose exposure to the curriculum is extended beyond the school day/building via access to devices, connectivity, and a digital platform – all of which bring together carefully linked learning content and tools.

Pupils work collaboratively through guided practice and teachers use structures for engagement, e.g., Rosenshine, Kagan and 'Teach Like a Champion' strategies, to effectively support a dynamic learning process. In Early Years, we provide an early year's network and curriculum resources to ensure that school learning environments provide rich and stimulating continuous provision that is based both indoors and outside. Our provision ensures the effective delivery of the Early Years' curriculum. There is a balance between adult-focused, adult-initiated, and child-initiated learning.

Education with Character

We value an education in which development of character is as important as any other success. We want pupils to look back on their schooling as a time of enjoyment and happiness which has inspired and challenged them in equal measure and prepared them for the ups and downs of life.

All schools offer pupils opportunities that extend their knowledge and understanding and improve their skills in a range of artistic, creative, and sporting activities. Amongst other things, they play for a team, perform in plays and concerts, attend a residential, listen to professional speakers, work with children from other schools, visit places of worship and take part in service and volunteering. Our schools ensure all pupils participate in these experiences and opportunities.

Each of our schools is a 'school family' and provides a supportive school community where all are valued. There are strong links and partnerships with parents which are focused on supporting learning. Children learn about the part they play in the local community and society at large. They know that they have a place in the world, whilst understanding that they are not at the centre of it.

We aspire in the future to make schools across the United Learning trust part of an integrated community hub serving as a focal point for frontline services. They will be focused around one or more of our schools in a locality and deliver services to parents, families, and the wider community to improve the life-chances of our pupils in the short- and long-term.

Continuous Improvement

Collaboration is at the heart of our work with all our schools. However good we are, we can always be better. We believe United Learning is unique in enabling us to share widely across the whole country, across primary and secondary phases, and across state and independent institutions. This means we are always learning from each other as well as visiting leading-edge schools and trusts from outside the group. We constantly strive to be better; we steal with pride and endeavour always to give the children in our schools the best possible opportunities. High levels of attainment and progress are expected in every United Learning school.

Staff operate in a culture of professional trust where they are encouraged to take risks, share good practice and value developing professionally. We aim for staff to feel invested in as professionals and supported to develop their skills as expert teachers and leaders. All line managers are supported to bring out the best in everyone – to expect the best from every adult, set challenges for staff, support them to deliver and hold them to account, listen and take feedback from their teams.

We ensure that staff development pathways are embedded in schools, with expected qualifications in each role, access to apprenticeships through our own training provider, and Group-wide and regional networks. These opportunities are available to teachers and support staff alike.

We have the aim that United Learning Primary schools will be research schools, linked to research hubs and actively engaged in development and implementation of effective improvement strategies.

Our annual surveys for pupils, parents and staff provide robust feedback on our progress towards our goals. They enable us to identify schools in need of support, and schools able to provide it.

Leadership in Every Role

United Learning expect every adult to take responsibility and the initiative to do what is right for the pupils. All those in formal leadership positions create the climate and culture in which others work. They demand the highest standards, build a performance culture, develop their teams, and create the space for others to lead.

All staff actively encourage pupils to take responsibility and show leadership, and they provide them with opportunities to do this. Headteachers focus on high standards, have high expectations and develop their staff. They are inclusive, reflective, and curious, with a strong commitment to knowledge-rich curriculum and education with character.

Leaders at all levels have access to centrally run leadership programmes. Newly appointed Principals have induction support and a mentor. We draw on expertise in the group to deliver an annual round of 'Aspiring to Middle Leadership', 'Aspiring to Senior Leadership' and 'Aspiring to Headship' courses. Additionally, we ask our schools to provide leadership opportunities as we believe development within one's own school is the most important and impactful way to sustainably improve. Leadership development pathways also exist that offer accredited qualifications and are delivered through 'by the trust for the trust'. Development supports the progression of colleagues (teachers as well as support staff) as we strive to ensure that our leaders reflect the diversity of our schools.

We recruit and train our local governing bodies to ensure that these are diverse and inclusive, and that they provide an appropriate and aligned layer of advisory governance and leadership at school level. LGB partnerships between schools are developed to support system-leadership within our clusters.

We are United in our drive to be the best place to learn and the best place to teach.