

The United Learning Way Secondary Academies

2023-24

Mission Statement

United Learning seek to improve the life chances of all the children and young people we serve and make it our mission to bring out 'the best in everyone'. For over 150 years we have set out to provide an excellent education for all, characterised by the highest expectations in all areas. As a group, we can offer more to both staff and young people than any single school could offer alone. The wide range of outstanding group-wide activities that we can provide means that more young people will have truly exceptional and inspiring experiences. We make it a priority to provide teachers with excellent professional support and development, so that every child receives an excellent education.

We are ambitious for all within a highly aspirational culture. We recognise the importance of each school having the autonomy to develop its own unique character and ethos, while celebrating the things we have in common and learning from each other.

United Learning schools are truly inclusive, welcoming children of all backgrounds, all faiths and none, all abilities and giving tens of thousands of children across the length and breadth of England an inspiring education.

We strive for enthusiastic and passionate teachers and use the quote by Robert Fried below as a benchmark for that success across every 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 that they cared about us, and the person we might become. It is this quality of caring about ideas and values, this fascination with the potential for growth within people, this depth and fervour about doing things well and striving for excellence, that comes closest to what I mean in describing 'passionate teaching.'

The Best from 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. Inclusion, diversity, and equality are central to everything we do across the Trust, not another thing to do.

These expectations are exemplified by disruption-free classrooms, calm and purposeful corridors, and a leading-edge character education programme. Our schools build a culture of fairness and trust. Centralised systems and routines - such as morning roll call and an explicit behaviour curriculum with associated rewards and sanctions - ensure that standards are clear and visible, and that staff model the behaviours we expect with warmth and care. We have high expectations of uniform standards and all our schools with Sixth Forms have a dress code. There are no hidden corners in our schools; all classrooms and common spaces reflect our shared values.

We expect pupils to attend school every day, to arrive on time and to complete homework and independent study throughout their school life. Mobile phones should not be seen or heard in our

schools. Habits of revision and application are developed throughout the school year, culminating in formal assessments at the end of each year for each subject studied within the curriculum. 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.

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 do this by delivering a broad and ambitious curriculum, carefully sequenced, and skillfully taught. Our curriculum should whisper to our children, 'you belong. You did not come from nowhere. You are one of us. All this came before you, and one day you too might add to it'.

Our common curriculum covers English, Maths, Science, History, Geography, RE, French, Spanish, Music, Sport, Art and PSHE. In each subject the curriculum provides a coherent programme of study which develops knowledge and skills term by term and year by year, from key stage 3 through to sixth form. The curriculum puts teachers in the driving seat. By providing lesson resources centrally, we enable teachers to plan lessons locally, to play to their own strengths and to adapt to the needs of their pupils.

Teachers are free to plan, teach and assess, and department time is devoted to curriculum planning and sharing subject knowledge. A whole-class, one-page marking policy is strongly recommended to improve the quality of feedback and ease teacher workload.

Crucially, we give pupils direct access to the curriculum through glossaries, knowledge organisers and a comprehensive curriculum website. By putting resources into pupils' hands and teaching effective study skills, we empower pupils to take control of their own learning and maximise achievement.

We use technologies to support effective teaching, enhancing and deepening teachers' ability to explain and model key concepts and assess pupils' understanding. This use of technology to accelerate learning extends to pupils' homes, giving them access to the curriculum beyond the school day.

Subject specialism is at the heart of our curriculum. Our subject advisers are a key part of our school improvement team: they visit schools, support Heads of Department, run subject networks and produce curriculum resources. We believe that no teacher should teach in isolation, so in subjects not covered by central advisers, such as some Sixth Form subjects, we provide support and enable collaboration through subject networks.

Barak Rosenshine's principles of instruction provide a shared language around the characteristics of effective teaching. As a result of our commitment to Rosenshine's principles we generally use the 'I/we/you' (teach – check – practise) model in our lesson planning: teacher explanation is generally followed by systematic checking for understanding, culminating in independent practice. Doug Lemov's 'Teach Like A Champion' (TLAC) techniques take this work even further by providing concrete, specific, actionable advice for teachers to practise over time.

Literacy and the mastery of language is a continuing priority for United Learning. No child should be left behind or disadvantaged in their literacy development. This commitment has led to the creation of a whole school reading programme in every United Learning school. This exposes all pupils to challenging, thought-provoking books, and to thousands of words a year that they may otherwise not encounter.

Because we want all pupils to access the whole curriculum, all schools in the Trust deliver a three-year Key Stage 3. No curriculum narrowing takes place and the National Curriculum is a minimum expectation across years 7-9.

Education with Character

We want to be a world leader in developing the whole child. We value an education in which development of character is as important as exam success. Our schools, therefore, all have a clear pathway to promote leadership, working independently and in teams, resilience, integrity, self-discipline, compassion, courage and respect for self and others. 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 our schools are expected to have excellent co-curricular programmes which are systematically monitored to ensure equality of education for every child. We emphasise links with the community and opportunities for voluntary and other service activities. Destinations are as much a part of the 'outcomes' we seek for our pupils as exam grades. We expect schools to have clear programmes of careers advice and guidance, enabling pupils to hear from employers and visit universities and workplaces, with the greatest support going to the pupils with the greatest need. Our pupils are exposed to people, ideas and opportunities that stretch their horizons and deepen their understanding of the world around them, developing their sense of themselves as citizens, both in their local communities and globally.

Sports, music, and the Arts are key components of a United Learning curriculum and co-curricular programme, enabling young people to explore other worlds, to test their own physical capacity, resilience, and endurance, and to achieve things they did not believe themselves capable of achieving. We have Trust-wide networks in these areas and our subject advisers lead and share best practice. We believe in the transformative power of creativity. We want all our pupils to be able to develop their talents, perform and play sport (including competitively) with their peers, and to be exposed to cultural events beyond their immediate experience.

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.

We have a team dedicated to continuous professional development who plan and deliver central programmes and conferences, and who quality-assure Career Professional Development in all our schools. We provide an additional 3 INSET days per academic year for staff exclusively directed at subject level planning and we benefit from school-led clusters across the country. Staff have access to Group-wide networks that enable them to make links with and learn from colleagues in similar roles in other schools.

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. A 'you said – we did' strategy is encouraged following any staff, parent, or student survey to maximise benefit and bring about positive change.

Leadership in Every Role

Every adult in the school is a leader. In every word, tone, and gesture, they set the direction and expectation. We 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 leaders listen, grow relationships, act with integrity and care, and expect the best from themselves and others in building a successful, happy, and confident school.

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 Middle Leadership, Senior Leadership and Headship courses. Additionally, we ask our schools to provide leadership opportunities to staff at all levels as we believe development within one's own school is the most important and impactful way to sustainably improve. We are proud of our commitment to allowing staff to build their career through the Trust and believe 'leaders are made, not born'.

Pupil leadership is equally important, and we want pupils to be given opportunities to take responsibility and initiative. Opportunities to lead in schools across the Trust is extensive and promoted across all year groups.

We promote inclusive leadership through leaders at every level feeling respected, valued, safe, trusted and having a sense of belonging throughout the United Learning community. It is a priority for us to grow leaders from a diverse background, so that our leaders more fully represent the communities we serve. We also value the governance of our schools provided by the local governing bodies and the support and challenge they offer, within the local context and community.

Our schools lead within their communities, developing links with partner organisations to ensure that children, young people, and their families are supported to thrive. Our staff share what they do best with others, using their influence to shape practice beyond their own school. Our schools are committed to ensuring they work in a sustainable way, seeking to avoid negative impact on the environment and climate.

United Learning
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