

Inspection of FUEL

Unit 7, Ellesmere Business Park, Haydn Road, Nottingham NG5 1DX

Inspection dates: 13 to 15 September 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Outstanding**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Staff know pupils and their backgrounds well. They recognise and treat each pupil as an individual. Staff are caring, encouraging and enthusiastic. Parents and carers, and pupils appreciate what the school provides. One pupil commented, 'The school can't be made better.'

Leaders set high expectations of pupils in both academic and vocational subjects. Staff help pupils learn to manage and improve their behaviour. Pupils say that there is no bullying and that they feel safe. They are confident that staff would sort out bullying should it occur. Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive. Pupils are listened to and respected.

Pupils enjoy a range of experiences, such as charity fundraising days and summer school activities. They gain from a range of opportunities that support their personal development. For example, they help with the school's food bank and visit different places of worship. They develop self-confidence and resilience. They are well prepared for their next steps. Pupils gain qualifications that will help them to be successful in their lives.

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

Leaders have developed a curriculum that focuses on preparing pupils for adulthood. The curriculum improves pupils' confidence and independence as well as their vocational and academic success. Subject leaders set out what they want pupils to learn and when in the different subjects. Teachers adapt these plans to meet pupils' needs, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff have secure knowledge of the subjects they teach.

Staff have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They make sure that the curriculum is ambitious for each pupil. Staff tap into pupils' interests, such as basketball, rap music and manga art, to engage pupils in their learning. Teachers sequence learning to make sure that pupils build on what they have learned before. For example, in mathematics teachers ensure that pupils develop their knowledge of fractions, percentages and decimals over time. This builds on their previous learning about probability. Teachers check pupils' learning through effective questioning and recap sessions. As a result, pupils know more and remember more over time.

Leaders understand the importance of reading. They have introduced several initiatives to develop pupils' love of reading. For example, pupils engage with the school's 'big read', based on graphic novels. Pupils use their phonics knowledge and spelling to read increasingly difficult words and texts. Pupils are well supported to develop their reading and comprehension skills.

Most pupils show positive attitudes to learning. Staff use a consistent, calm and positive approach to managing behaviour. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. Staff provide individual support for pupils who find managing their conduct

more difficult. Leaders are focused on improving pupils' attendance. Pupils' attendance and behaviour improve when compared to their experience in their previous schools. However, too many pupils are regularly absent.

Leaders place pupils' personal development at the heart of the school's work. Leaders have planned a personal social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum that includes age-appropriate relationships, sex and health education. Pupils learn about potential risks linked to online activity, alcohol, smoking, drugs and extremism. Pupils learn about diversity and equality, and about different faiths and cultures. However, some struggle to recall in detail what they have learned from studying about them. Pupils receive impartial careers advice and guidance. This helps to prepare them for their next steps.

Directors, leaders and teachers are driven by a clear moral purpose. They are aspirational for the future of every pupil. Leaders ensure that teachers' professional development supports the school's ongoing development. Staff recognise that leaders are supportive and considerate of their well-being and workload.

The proprietor securely and consistently meets the independent school standards. Directors know and understand their responsibilities. They meet their statutory duties, including the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, including Schedule 10. Directors ensure that school policies and procedures are appropriate and implemented well. The school's safeguarding policy is on the school's website. Directors evaluate potential risks and put control measures in place to reduce them. They ensure that leaders have high expectations and promote pupils' well-being. Directors are effective in supporting and challenging leaders to improve the school further.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Leaders have robust processes in place to support pupils' welfare. Staff are well trained. They understand the potential risks that pupils may experience. Leaders identify pupils that may need support. They provide appropriate support. They work well with external agencies to provide additional help when needed.

Leaders ensure that safeguarding records are orderly and detailed. Careful checks are undertaken on adults before they start working at the school. Directors fulfil their responsibilities well. They regularly check on the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding systems. Pupils say that they are safe in school. Staff also believe that pupils are safe in school.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- Pupils have a range of opportunities to support their personal development and learning across a range of subjects. However, pupils are not as confident as they should be in remembering some aspects of their learning, including learning related to different faiths and religions. Teachers need to ensure that all pupils have the best opportunity across the range of subjects to become secure in the knowledge they need to support their personal development.
- Many pupils are regularly absent. These pupils do not benefit from the good quality of education the school provides. This limits these pupils' opportunities to achieve well and be prepared for their next steps. Leaders should ensure that pupils and parents receive the necessary support and challenge to reduce absence so that these pupils benefit fully from the school's provision.

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	142930
DfE registration number	892/6021
Local authority	Nottingham
Inspection number	10232308
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	13 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	34
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Colin Bernard
Chair	Adrian McGregor
Headteacher	Sarah Powell
Annual fees (day pupils)	£125–£135 per day (group places) £246 per day (one-to-one target group places)
Telephone number	01159 609139
Website	www.fueleducation.org.uk
Email address	sarah@fueleducation.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 January to 1 February 2018

Information about this school

- First Universal Enterprises Ltd (FUEL) opened as an independent school in June 2017. It had previously operated as an alternative provision, providing mostly part-time education for pupils registered at local maintained schools.
- The school provides full- or part-time education for pupils in the age range 13 to 16 years.
- The school operates from a site based on an industrial estate in Sherwood, Nottingham. This site has fully equipped workshops for construction and mechanics.
- The school does not use the services of any alternative providers.

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.

- 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 met with the headteacher, other senior leaders and other members of staff.
- The lead inspector met with the leader of health and safety and the chair of proprietors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, PSHE and vocational learning. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered a wide variety of school documents, including the school improvement plan.
- Inspectors took note of the responses received on Ofsted Parent View and considered the results of the Ofsted staff questionnaire. Inspectors met with several groups of pupils.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's safeguarding-related policies, scrutinised the single central record, checked the school's procedures for the safe recruitment of staff and met with the safeguarding leader.

- Inspectors considered relevant documentation and reviewed the school facilities, to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

Stephen Long, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Janis Warren

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
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