

FUEL

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

Inspection dates

30 January–1 February 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Senior leaders demonstrate dedication and commitment to improving life chances for pupils who have not previously experienced success in their education.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good. Leaders and teaching staff work tirelessly to ensure that pupils succeed in their studies and in their personal development. Pupils respect the staff.
- Pupils make good progress from their various starting points and achieve commendable academic and vocational qualifications. Almost all pupils who leave the school at the end of year 11 move to successful placements in further education or employment with training.
- Pupils improve their attitudes to learning at the school and are proud of their successes. Overall behaviour is good and contributes to effective learning. Any incidents of poor behaviour are managed effectively.
- Senior leaders monitor and improve the quality of the curriculum and of teaching on an ongoing basis. They have a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and they take decisive action to address any concerns.
- The proprietors are actively involved in assessing the quality of the school's work. They also act decisively to implement the well-judged recommendations of external partners.
- Senior leaders ensure that there is meticulous and effective attention to all aspects of safeguarding. Parents recognise that pupils are well looked after and safe in school.
- The curriculum has recently been extended effectively with the introduction of GCSE courses. Senior leaders recognise the need to extend the range of GCSE subjects.
- Teachers are skilled at using real-life examples and visual images to improve learning, where appropriate.
- Occasionally, teaching is less effective because it does not engage pupils' interest or promote their confidence.
- The attendance of the majority of pupils who were previously persistent absentees improves when they come to the school. Staff implement rigorous procedures to monitor and improve attendance. A minority of pupils are still persistently absent or regularly late.
- The proprietor and senior leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching in all subjects provides experiences that enable all pupils to access learning confidently and make consistent progress.
- Extend the range of GCSE subjects available for full-time pupils, in response to their individual needs and interests.
- Further develop strategies to improve the attendance and punctuality of those pupils whose progress is negatively affected by persistent absence or lateness.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The proprietors and senior leaders are highly motivated to ensure that pupils with previously negative experiences of school develop positive attitudes and achieve success. They have created a culture of ambition, persistence and dedication among the staff, which encourages pupils to aspire to improve their future prospects.
- Relationships between leaders and staff are strong and positive. This contributes effectively to mutual trust and respect between staff and pupils. Pupils recognise that staff believe in them and will always help them to make good decisions about their actions and attitudes.
- Parents who completed a recent questionnaire were positive about the experiences provided by the school. They believe that pupils achieve good outcomes and make good progress in their personal development. Staff express similar, positive views about the work of the school and its constructive impact on previously reluctant learners.
- Senior leaders have created an effective curriculum which is responsive to the individual needs of part-time and full-time pupils. They maintain a constructive dialogue with placing authorities to make sure that part-time pupils receive a balanced learning experience.
- The school's second site includes extensive sports facilities. These are used extremely effectively to develop pupils' individual skill levels, teamwork and self-esteem.
- The curriculum structure is tightly organised to ensure that all pupils have access to worthwhile vocational courses, including mechanics, construction, health and social care, childcare and sport. One-to-one tuition is provided where necessary to ensure that all pupils are able to experience appropriate success.
- The school has recently introduced GCSE courses for full-time pupils. Initially, this has focused on English, mathematics and citizenship. Senior leaders have begun to plan for possible extension of the range of GCSE courses provided.
- The school makes a strong commitment to strengthening the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Pupils take part in a variety of projects that promote British values, including liberty and justice, democracy and tolerance. For example, pupils visit different places of worship and view videos representing a variety of cultures and values.
- Senior leaders make effective use of the services of the local careers advisers. Pupils have access to individual interviews and comprehensive information about college courses and career opportunities in the local area. The school provides strong support for individual pupils as they prepare applications for college places. They are accompanied by staff on taster visits to colleges.
- In addition, pupils are able to take part in work experience, dependent on a suitable risk assessment and availability of placements. Pupils are therefore well prepared for their next steps.
- Posters, classroom displays and learning activities promote a culture of equal opportunity and mutual respect. The personal and social development (PSD) programme, for

example, includes effective activities related to rights and responsibilities, challenging gender stereotypes and understanding the protected characteristics in British law.

- The proprietors and senior leaders have ensured that the requirements of the independent school standards are met.
- Senior leaders' commitment to self-evaluation, continuous review and planned improvement demonstrates good capacity for further improvement.

Governance

- The proprietors, including the head of school, have a detailed and well-informed view of the quality of the school's work and areas for further improvement. They respond positively to the findings and recommendations of regular reviews and audits completed by placing authorities and schools.
- The school's independent quality manager takes highly effective responsibility for the systematic review of the curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment. The head of school and senior leaders continuously monitor the daily activity in classrooms and around the school. Senior leaders have a good understanding of all aspects of the school's work. They maintain accurate self-evaluation documentation which contributes effectively to continuous improvement.
- Senior leaders implement regular and comprehensive arrangements for the management of staff performance. This includes regular supervisions, appropriate targets and good opportunities for further staff training.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school has produced a comprehensive safeguarding policy which takes full account of the latest legal guidance. The policy is available to parents on the school's website.
- Senior leaders are extremely vigilant and provide effective oversight of all aspects of child protection and safety. Staff are appropriately trained to recognise the risks to which pupils may be exposed, including risks of sexual exploitation, radicalisation and knife crime. Staff recognise the vulnerability of many of their pupils and are strongly committed to promoting their well-being both within school and beyond.
- Senior leaders have appointed a team of staff to fulfil leadership roles in relation to safeguarding. They ensure that the training for staff provided by the local authority is regularly updated and that staff have a full understanding to any changes in legislation. The designated safeguarding lead maintains exemplary records of any concerns, actions taken and communications with parents and external agencies.
- Senior leaders recognise the potential safeguarding risks associated with absence from school. Some pupils find maintaining good attendance to be extremely challenging. The school takes immediate action to address absence, including visits to pupils' homes and regular communication with the education welfare service of the local authority. This underpins the school's commitment to individual pupils' safety.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The good quality of teaching is based on positive relationships between staff and pupils, through which pupils know that staff care about them and want them to succeed.
- The majority of pupils have had limited success in their previous education. They enter the school disaffected and have limited aspirations for the future. The school's focus on meeting individual needs ensures that work is relevant and at an appropriate level of challenge to help pupils to make good progress.
- Teachers plan tasks and activities that build up pupils' knowledge at an appropriate speed. Pupils are given time to think, to discuss and to ask questions. For example, in a PSD lesson pupils were encouraged to share their own understanding of human rights and to express their personal points of view.
- Staff have clear expectations that pupils will behave well and cooperate appropriately. Pupils respond positively and take their work seriously. The school's behaviour support staff are successful in supporting and encouraging active participation in any circumstances, including when the behaviour of an individual may distract others from successful learning.
- Teachers engage in continuous discussion with individuals and groups of pupils. They check pupils' understanding and help to correct any misunderstandings. In an English lesson focused on interpreting and understanding written text the teacher made sure that pupils understood the written questions and also searched carefully for the information needed to answer accurately. Teachers display considerable patience and are sensitive to individual pupils' strengths and personal characteristics.
- Staff place an appropriate emphasis on the development of pupils' reading skills. The majority of pupils are confident to read aloud and to share their written ideas with others. Pupils have wide-ranging opportunities to write notes, reports, plans and essays. The quality of pupils' handwriting, spelling and punctuation is variable. Staff give appropriate attention to supporting pupils to improve these aspects of their work.
- Pupils develop their numeracy skills in a variety of lessons. Tasks in construction and mechanics, in particular, provide pupils with regular opportunities to develop their use of numbers, measurement and calculations.
- Pupils enjoy practical tasks, including those that require independent decision-making and organisation. Pupils in mechanics worked confidently identifying those aspects of a car that require checking in an MOT test. They learned quickly and were willing to accept responsibility for the task. Pupils in health and social care worked independently, sharing ideas where appropriate, as they planned a themed party.
- Teachers in academic and vocational subjects demonstrate good subject knowledge. They are skilled at communicating; for example, combining technical vocabulary with clear explanations. Pupils enjoy learning and sustain their concentration well across the full range of subjects studied.
- When working towards external assessments and qualifications, pupils receive helpful advice and suggestions about how to improve their work. They understand how their grades can be improved and mostly respond diligently to teachers' suggestions.

- Staff make regular use of real-life contexts to develop pupils' learning skills and communication. In a PSD lesson, for example, the teacher challenged pupils to prepare suitable questions to interview an applicant for a job in the motor vehicle trade. Pupils responded creatively as they prepared and took part in role play, using their questions both for the interviewer and the applicant.
- Staff make good use of visual resources and presentations, particularly when demonstrating practical activities. Pupils worked with care and precision in a construction lesson, marking out a wall for painting. Following a clear demonstration from the teacher, they took independent responsibility and used their initiative to overcome problems. Pupils also make regular use of computers to prepare presentations, compile plans and reports, and to illustrate their work appropriately.
- The school makes effective use of a variety of external accreditations to assess pupils' progress. Staff communicate regularly with parents, providing written reports that set out appropriate details of pupils' successes and their progress against their individual targets.
- Occasionally, staff do not include sufficient examples to aid pupils' understanding, for example when explaining complex ideas. As a result, pupils do not always maintain their focus at the level of concentration required to achieve the outcomes of which they are capable.
- Overall, the quality of pupils' learning is good. They demonstrate respect for staff and recognise the high levels of support and encouragement that they receive.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils develop self-confidence and self-esteem, often from low starting points. On entry to the school, they often find it difficult to accept the changes in attitude required to achieve success.
- Once they have adjusted to the school's expectations and recognised the respect with which they are treated, they mostly develop positive attitudes to staff and to their work. The great majority of pupils learn to take pride in their work and achievements.
- Staff are very skilled at improving pupils' ability to listen to others and to consider different viewpoints. Work in all subjects is underpinned by the effective development of personal and social skills. Staff emphasise the importance of positive relationships, cooperation and independence in the workplace. They provide extensive opportunities for these qualities to be displayed in school and most pupils learn to respond constructively.
- There is an appropriate emphasis on personal decision-making throughout a number of curriculum experiences. Much of the work is related to preparing for employment, including further study towards improved qualifications. The majority of pupils begin to understand the link between their attitudes to learning, the achievement of qualifications and their readiness to enter employment.
- Pupils are safe in school and parents appreciate this. Pupils learn how to keep safe through a number of topics in the curriculum. These include the development of pupils' awareness of e-safety, child sexual exploitation, radicalisation and risks associated with

knife crime. Pupils develop a secure understanding of how to ensure healthy lifestyles, including both physical and mental health.

- British values are promoted in corridor displays and curriculum projects. Pupils are provided with opportunities to take part in enterprise projects and to contribute to the local community through charitable events and collections. Staff are strongly committed to the wider development of pupils' personal values and social responsibility.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils who have been permanently excluded from school, or who are at risk of exclusion, demonstrate strong improvements in their behaviour. They develop positive attitudes to learning and respect for staff.
- The school is an orderly environment. Pupils treat the buildings with respect, including the extensive displays in public areas and classrooms. Pupils value their work. Learning proceeds without interruption and pupils work safely in practical environments.
- The use of derogatory language or stereotyping by individual pupils is not accepted. The majority of pupils demonstrate considerable tolerance of difference and are very supportive of each other. The school has high expectations regarding the treatment of others. Staff respond swiftly to any potential bullying or prejudicial behaviour. Pupils value the support they receive.
- Any incidents are managed well and not allowed to escalate. Pupils know that they may take time out, or move to 'safe spaces', if they need to manage their emotions or any personal distresses. Staff have high expectations of cooperation with the expectations of the school and they manage these expectations sensitively and considerately.
- Overall attendance is below the national average and the school works tenaciously to deal with a minority of persistent absentees. School records demonstrate that the majority of pupils improve their attendance once placed at the school. Improvement in attendance and punctuality is a high priority and staff implement a range of strategies to address concerns and ensure that pupils are safe.
- Staff make a daily morning call to every parent before school starts. This represents diligent attention to pupils' well-being and ensures that known or anticipated absence is monitored and acted upon. Senior leaders are vigilant in their actions to support families. They visit homes where they have a concern and work closely with the education welfare service of the local authority.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make good progress with their learning from various starting points. On entry to the school, the majority of pupils have gaps in their learning due to previous periods out of school. Their attainment is mostly below the average for their age.
- Pupils make strong progress in English and mathematics. They begin to close gaps in their previous learning and to recognise the value of achieving qualifications relevant to their future career aspirations.
- Standards of pupils' reading are mostly sufficiently secure to help them access the wider curriculum. Their writing is more variable. The presentation of their written work,

including their handwriting, is often weak. However, they make sufficient progress to achieve Level 1 or Level 2 qualifications in a range of subjects. Many pupils develop sufficient skills in the use of computers to improve their communication and meet the demands of assessed assignments.

- Teaching staff continuously monitor the work of individual pupils, checking and discussing their work with them. Pupils respond positively to their individual targets and many increase their target grades as they make sufficient progress.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well by teachers and teaching assistants. These pupils benefit from the small teaching group sizes and the personal support and challenge available to them. They achieve qualifications in academic and vocational subjects that demonstrate good progress over time.
- Pupils' overall attainment is mostly below national standards, but their progress is good. Disadvantaged pupils mostly improve their rates of progress. In particular, they develop more positive attitudes to tests and external examinations.
- The first cohort of pupils since the school was registered left the school in summer 2017. These pupils almost all met their individual targets across the full range of subjects studied. They achieved external examinations in functional skills English and mathematics, together with awards, certificates and diplomas in mechanics, construction, health and social care and childcare. In addition, they achieved examination success in PSD, together with a variety of awards in work-related studies.
- The great majority of leavers from Year 11 moved on to positive destinations in further education or apprenticeships. Many built on their school qualifications by studying similar vocational courses at a higher level. The destinations of a small number of leavers are not known by the school.
- Current pupils are making similar rates of progress across the full range of subjects studied. A small number are studying recently introduced GCSE courses in English and mathematics. They are making good progress towards mostly foundation level awards in these subjects.
- Overall, the school is successful in turning around the attitudes and aspirations of pupils and motivating them towards the achievements of valuable qualifications.

School details

Unique reference number	142930
DfE registration number	892/6021
Inspection number	10043805

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

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	37
Number of part-time pupils	27
Proprietor	First Universal Enterprises Ltd
Chair	Colin Bernard
Head of school	Adrian McGregor
Annual fees (day pupils)	£95 to £110 per day (group places) £225 per day (1:1 target group places)
Telephone number	01159 609139
Website	www.fueltd.co.uk
Email address	admin@fueleducation.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- First Universal Enterprises Ltd (FUEL) opened as a registered 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. Pupils admitted to the school have been permanently excluded from school or are at risk of permanent exclusion. The majority of pupils attend part time and are dual registered with their placing schools.

- The school operates from a main site based on an industrial estate in Sherwood, Nottingham. This site has fully equipped workshops for construction and mechanics. The school has a second site based in a community sports centre. This second site includes additional classrooms and office space.
- The school caters for pupils who have challenging behaviour. Currently, no pupils have an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs.
- The school does not use the services of any alternative providers.
- This is the school's first standard Ofsted inspection.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in academic and vocational courses across the full age range of the school. He scrutinised samples of pupils' work in a variety of subjects, including English, mathematics and vocational subjects.
- The inspector held discussions with representatives of the proprietor. He discussed all aspects of the school's leadership and management with the head of school, senior leaders and members of staff.
- The inspector considered responses to recent questionnaires completed by 16 parents and 32 pupils. He also considered responses to an inspection questionnaire completed by 20 members of staff. There were no responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.
- The inspector scrutinised a number of school policies, procedures and records in order to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

David Young, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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