



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**Material Change Inspection Report**

**The Unicorn School**

**June 2023**

## School's details

<b>School</b>	The Unicorn School			
<b>DfE number</b>	931/6109			
<b>Registered charity number</b>	1070807			
<b>Address</b>	The Unicorn School 20 Marcham Road Abingdon Oxfordshire OX14 1AA			
<b>Telephone number</b>	01235 530222			
<b>Email address</b>	office@unicornoxford.co.uk			
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Andrew Day			
<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Andrew Strivens			
<b>Proprietor</b>	The Unicorn Trust			
<b>Age range</b>	6 to 17			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	108			
	<b>Juniors</b>	32	<b>Seniors</b>	76
<b>Date of inspection</b>	30 June 2023			

# 1. Introduction

## Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 The Unicorn School is a co-educational day school for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), in particular, specific learning difficulties including dyslexia, developmental coordination disorder (DCD), dyscalculia and speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). All pupils receive additional specialist help. Sixty pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. No pupils speak English as an additional language. The school is organised into the junior department for pupils aged seven to eleven and the senior department for pupils aged eleven to sixteen. The school is a charitable foundation which was founded in 1991 in Abingdon, and its work is overseen by its governing body. The school's previous inspection was a regulatory compliance inspection in January 2022.

## Purpose of the inspection

- 1.2 This was an announced material change inspection at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) to assess the school's proposal to increase its capacity from 108 to 120 pupils. The inspection focused on the school's compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs).

Regulations which were the focus of the inspection	Team judgements
Part 3, paragraph 7 (safeguarding)	<b>Met</b>
Part 3, paragraph 11 (health and safety)	<b>Met</b>
Part 3, paragraph 12 (fire safety)	<b>Met</b>
Part 3, paragraph 14 (supervision of pupils)	<b>Met</b>
Part 3, paragraph 16 (risk assessment)	<b>Met</b>
Part 4, paragraphs 18–21 (suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors)	<b>Met</b>
Part 5, paragraphs 23–29 (premises and accommodation)	<b>Met</b>
Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information)	<b>Met</b>
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management)	<b>Met</b>

## 2. Inspection findings

### Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 7]

#### Safeguarding policy

- 2.1 The school meets the requirements.
- 2.2 The school has an appropriate policy for safeguarding which provides suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school.

#### Safeguarding implementation

- 2.3 The school meets the standard.
- 2.4 The school implements its arrangements effectively to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils. Safeguarding matters are suitably overseen by the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) who is a member of the senior leadership team, supported by deputy DSLs in each section of the school. The DSL liaises effectively with the governor responsible for safeguarding to ensure effective oversight of safeguarding procedures, to monitor the implementation of the policy and to ensure that an annual review of safeguarding is undertaken in line with the local authority framework. During discussions staff demonstrated that they understood recent training with regard to Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2022. They were suitably aware of contextual safeguarding and the vulnerabilities of pupils attending the school, child-on-child abuse and the need to respond to all concerns, including low-level concerns. Staff are suitably inducted in the school's procedures, which include a comprehensive staff code of conduct, when they join the school. This induction is enhanced through training sessions at the start of each term and regular updates. The DSLs have attended the appropriate level of interagency training. Governors have also undergone suitable training in safeguarding.
- 2.5 The school maintains appropriate, confidential records of all child protection concerns. There is appropriate liaison with children's services for guidance, when making referrals and when notifying the authority regarding pupil absence or when pupils leave the school. The school liaises appropriately with the local authority designated officer (LADO) with regard to any concerns. It implements appropriate procedures to manage any allegations against adults working with pupils.
- 2.6 During discussions pupils stated confidently that they feel safe in school and that there are a wide range of staff to whom they can turn if they are worried or concerned. They mentioned the value of individual support given by their tutors and the emotional literacy support assistants (ELSAs). When pupils raise concerns, they receive a suitable response. Appropriate action is taken when necessary without delay. This is confirmed by detailed records of safeguarding. Pupils understand how to stay safe online and the school monitors the use of technology appropriately. Leadership and governance have considered carefully and acted upon the contextual impact of admitting additional numbers of pupils including through the appointment of additional staff. The school is likely to continue to meet requirements with the increased pupil numbers applied for.

### Welfare, health and safety of pupils – health and safety [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 11]

- 2.7 The school meets the standard.
- 2.8 The school's provision for health and safety is appropriate. Detailed and well-organised records are kept of comprehensive health and safety checks, some of which are undertaken by appropriate external specialists. Hazardous materials such as those used in the science laboratories and by cleaners are stored securely. Governors monitor health and safety effectively, supporting staff in

responding to any health and safety issues without delay. The school is likely to continue to meet requirements with the increased pupil numbers applied for.

### **Welfare, health and safety of pupils – fire safety [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 12]**

- 2.9 The school meets the standard.
- 2.10 The school has an appropriate policy and procedures for fire safety. There are regular fire drills which are suitably recorded, and any issues are followed up promptly. Pupils confirmed that they know how to respond in an emergency and staff are given appropriate training in fire safety. An external company carries out an annual fire risk assessment and any issues raised are addressed without delay. Suitable fire prevention equipment is in place and regularly tested and maintained. The school is likely to continue to meet requirements with the increased pupil numbers applied for.

### **Welfare, health and safety of pupils – supervision of pupils [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 14]**

- 2.11 The school meets the standard.
- 2.12 The school ensures that appropriate staff-to-pupil ratios are in place consistently to meet the needs of pupils. Suitable rotas are in place for supervision before and after school, during breaks and lunchtimes. Appropriate care is taken in ensuring that pupils are appropriately supervised when travelling to and from school in taxis and other forms of transport. Suitable plans are in place to ensure that this appropriate level of supervision continues when pupil numbers increase.

### **Welfare, health and safety of pupils – risk assessment [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 16]**

- 2.13 The school meets the standard.
- 2.14 The school implements a suitable risk assessment policy which identifies key areas of risk, and assessments identify steps to be taken to mitigate risks identified. Risk assessment includes appropriate risk assessments for safeguarding and for SEND. Risk assessments are checked by leadership and monitored appropriately by governance. Staff have received appropriate training in risk assessment. They assess risks effectively on site, particularly taking into account the needs of pupils and prior to any educational visits. The school is likely to continue to meet requirements with the increased pupil numbers applied for.

### **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors [ISSR Part 4, paragraphs 18–21]**

- 2.15 The school meets the standards.
- 2.16 Additional staff have been recruited appropriately to accommodate the increase in numbers which will maintain the school's policy on pupil-staff ratios. All the required checks are carried out prior to appointment and recorded accurately on the single central register of appointments (SCR). Appropriate supporting documentation is maintained in staff files. The SCR is regularly monitored by leadership, the safeguarding governor and external advisors in order to ensure that the school consistently meets requirements. The school is likely to continue to meet requirements with the increased pupil numbers applied for.

**Premises and accommodation [ISSR Part 5, paragraphs 23–29]**

- 2.17 The school meets the standards.
- 2.18 Leadership and governance have reviewed the premises and facilities comprehensively. They have added two additional classrooms in order to ensure that the additional number of pupils proposed can be accommodated whilst maintaining the current standards. Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are appropriate; water provision is suitable. Appropriate outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play. In addition, pupils also have access to extensive external facilities for physical education and sport activities. The school is likely to continue to meet requirements with the increased pupil numbers applied for.

**Provision of information [ISSR Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c)]**

- 2.19 The school meets the requirements for providing information relating to safeguarding to parents. Particulars of the arrangements for safeguarding are published on the school's website.

**Quality of leadership and management [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34]**

- 2.20 The school meets the standard.
- 2.21 Governance, leadership and management take appropriate action to ensure that the school meets the standards consistently and actively promotes the pupils' wellbeing. Appropriate training for governors, leadership and all staff is in place including for safeguarding, which ensures they have the requisite knowledge and skills. Suitable procedures for monitoring all aspects of compliance are in place. The potential impact of the proposed increase in pupil numbers has been considered with appropriate care and suitable plans are in place to accommodate these. The school is likely to continue to meet requirements with the increased pupil numbers applied for.

### **3. Recommendation with regard to material change inspection**

#### **Summary of findings**

- 3.1 Governors and school leaders have considered with appropriate care the potential impact of the proposed increase in pupil numbers. They have suitable plans and provision in place to accommodate these numbers of pupils. The needs of current and future pupils have been appropriately taken into consideration whilst ensuring that current school standards are maintained and the regulatory requirements met consistently.

#### **Recommendation**

- 3.2 It is recommended that the school's request to increase its current registered capacity of 108 pupils to 120 pupils is approved.

## **4. Summary of evidence**

- 4.1 The inspector scrutinised a range of documentation, records and policies and held discussions with the head, chair of governors, senior leaders and other members of staff. She visited different areas of the school and talked with groups of pupils.

### **Inspectors**

Dr Patricia Preedy

Reporting inspector