



**United Learning**  
The best in everyone™



# The United Learning Way

Primary Academies





## Foreword

United Learning seek to improve the life chances of all the children 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 with the highest expectations in all areas of school life.

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. As a group, we can offer more to both children and adults than any single school could offer alone.

We are ambitious for every child and every adult. We recognise the importance of each school having the autonomy to develop its own unique character and ethos, while celebrating the common values and principles which enable us to learn from each other.

We share a sense of moral purpose and a commitment to doing what is right for children. We want all children in our schools to meet passionate teachers who will enable them to learn, develop and thrive.

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*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.*

**Robert Fried**

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# Best from Everyone

Every child is special and capable of extraordinary things. Their limitless potential flourishes in a culture of hard work and kindness. We challenge them to do what they think they can't, to persist, to work hard and to be at their best.

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.



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

A positive culture in our schools drives good behaviour, which is reinforced through explicit teaching of expectations. Pupils move around their school in a calm manner. They are kind, thoughtful, respectful, establish positive relationships with adults in school and are able to hold a conversation on their own. All school staff respond to, rather than react to, behaviour issues, and every problem is seen and used as a learning opportunity. Pupils feel happy and safe in school and are confident to approach adults if they are experiencing any issues. Our schools make reasonable adjustments where necessary, including through supporting the use of assistive technology, to enable pupils with special educational needs to thrive.





We expect pupils to attend school every day, to arrive on time and to engage positively in their learning. Classrooms are focused and energetic. Teachers expect learning to be presented to a high standard and this is demonstrated in displays and pupils' books. Children's academic progress and achievement is of the highest priority throughout their time in the Trust and our common curriculum entitlement underpins every school's curriculum.

Parents are an integral part of the school community. Staff and families engage positively with one another and have the best interests of children in mind.

At a group level, we work closely with our schools to provide support and challenge, underpinned by a culture of trust and collaboration. We expect colleagues in schools and in the central primary education team to work together to provide an exceptional education.

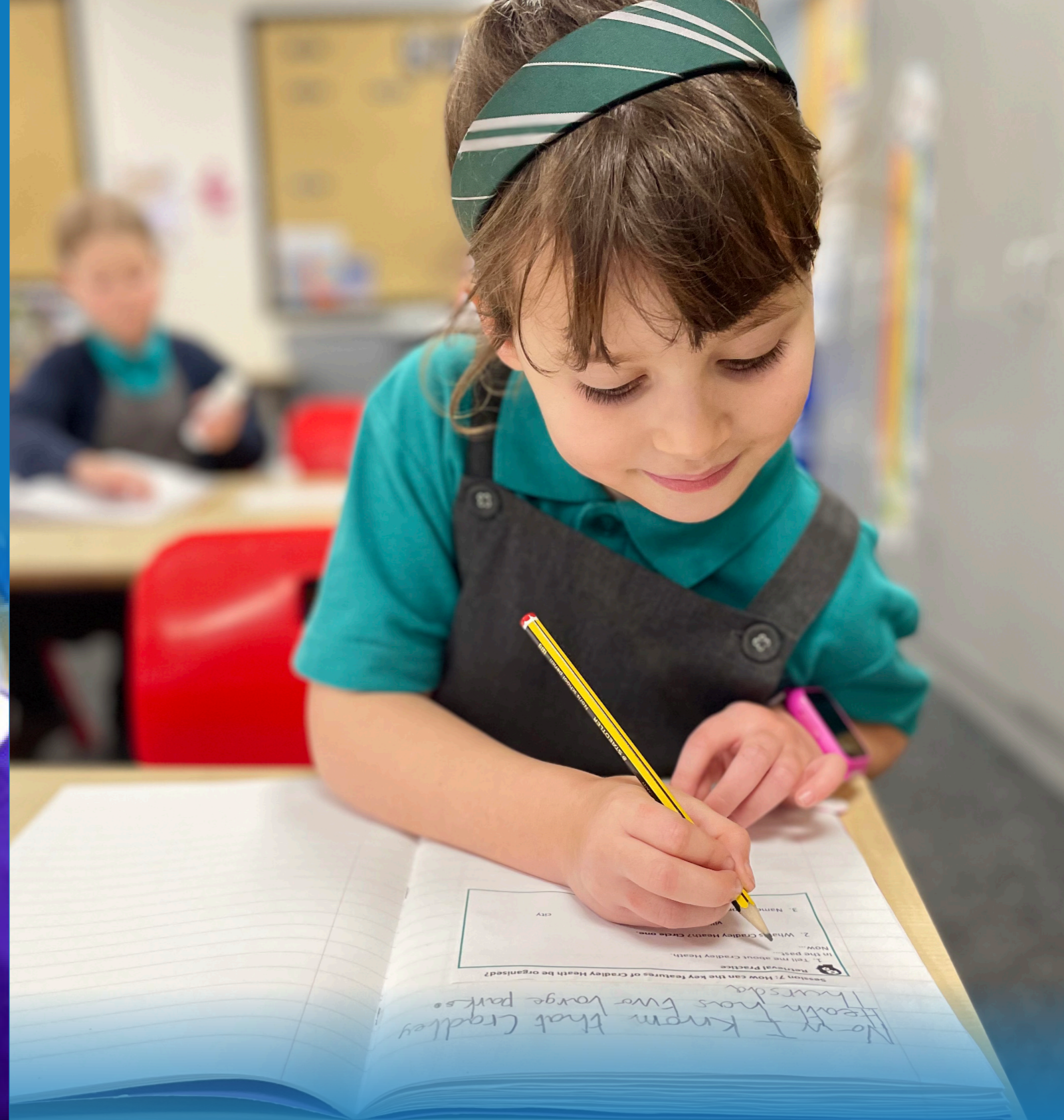




# Powerful Knowledge

Through our curriculum we empower pupils to understand and shape the world around them, as well as achieve great academic results. 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 skilfully taught, which challenges pupils' learning, deepens knowledge, and extends their horizons.

Our curriculum puts an emphasis on the core teaching of maths and English, enabling pupils to develop a mastery of language and fluent mathematical skills. It also develops pupils as geographers, historians, artists, musicians, and athletes. The primary curriculum puts teachers in the driving seat. By collaborating with subject leads and providing lessons centrally, we enable teachers to plan lessons locally, to play to their own strengths and to adapt materials for their local context and the needs of their pupils.



The importance and joy of reading is clear to see in all our schools. They are filled with books written by a wide range of different authors, matched to different year groups and read at every opportunity. All schools have a balanced reading approach, using synthetic phonics schemes to teach reading and enable children to read fluently and confidently. Reading effectively and being exposed to thousands of words a week opens doors otherwise closed to many primary-aged children. Pupils read for pleasure regularly and adults and pupils talk with enthusiasm about their favourite books and authors.





In Nursery and Reception, all our schools deliver a rich and stimulating Early Years curriculum through effective indoor and outdoor learning environments. There is a balance between adult-focused, adult-initiated, and child-initiated learning. Staff are supported through our early years network and curriculum resources.

We support teachers to build their subject knowledge and to teach the curriculum skillfully through our online resources and subject networks, reinforced by in-school CPD. This support covers areas such as effective curriculum sequencing, selection of appropriate tasks, activities and assessments, planning for common misconceptions and addressing common sticking points in the curriculum content that they are teaching.

Our schools 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 confines of the school day.

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' model in our lesson planning, so that learning tends to follow a pattern of teacher explanation followed by guided practice and culminating in independent practice. Teachers use structures for engagement such as Kagan and 'Teach Like a Champion' strategies, to support pupils to work collaboratively while introducing and checking understanding of new concepts and knowledge and building pupils' vocabulary.





# Education with Character

A United Learning education develops the whole person, not just the mind. 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.

Our schools give all pupils opportunities to lead and to serve. Children learn to work independently and in teams. The opportunities we offer are designed to develop integrity, resilience, determination, self-discipline, compassion, courage and respect for self and others.

All our schools offer their 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 will have the opportunity to play for a sports team, learn an instrument or join a choir, perform in plays and concerts in public and take part in acts of service and volunteering. Our schools ensure all pupils participate in these experiences and opportunities.



Sports, music and the arts are important to us. They enable 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 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.

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, including through service to others. They 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, in their communities and globally. They know that they have a place in the world, whilst understanding that they are not at the centre of it.



# 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.

All staff actively encourage pupils to take responsibility and initiative and show leadership, and they provide them with opportunities to do this, for example: student council, prefects, sports leaders, eco schools, and social action groups.



Leaders at all levels have access to centrally-run leadership programmes. Newly appointed Heads 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 colleagues at all levels as we believe development within one's own school is the most important and impactful way to improve sustainably. We are proud of our commitment to allowing staff to build their career through the trust and believe 'leaders are made, not born'.

We promote inclusive leadership in which colleagues at every level feel respected, valued, safe, trusted and have a sense of belonging to the United Learning community. Our approach to professional development supports teachers and support staff of all backgrounds to progress into leadership roles, as we strive to ensure that our leaders reflect the diversity of our schools.





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.



All our schools have a local governing body, which plays a key role in providing support and challenge and in ensuring effective local governance, linked closely to the community. We recruit and train our local governing bodies to ensure that these are diverse and inclusive, and that they are well informed regarding Trust-wide strategy and policies, national policy and best practice in governance. Across our clusters, partnership between local governing bodies supports local system leadership.



# Continuous Improvement

However good we are, we can always be better – and acting on this belief to achieve continuous improvement is at the heart of all we do. 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. Our schools also work in local clusters to improve outcomes and address any issues specific to their region. 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. When it comes to ideas and good practices, we ‘steal with pride’ – putting first the need to give the best to children.

Colleagues operate in a culture of professional trust and support where they are encouraged to take risks, share good practice and value developing professionally. We aim for colleagues 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 provide an additional three INSET days per academic year to give teachers more time for planning.



Our CPD handbooks set clear expectations and provide guidance for in-school professional development, which is quality-assured by our central teams. Teachers and support staff have clear development pathways with the opportunity to obtain relevant qualifications, to access apprenticeships through our own training provider, and to benefit from leadership development.

Our approach to local clustering brings benefits to staff through extending opportunities for professional development, including networking, observation and formal shared training. Colleagues also have access to Group-wide and regional networks that enable them to make links with and learn from colleagues in similar roles in other schools.

We aim for all our primary schools to 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. We encourage a ‘you said – we did’ strategy following any staff, parent, or student survey to maximise benefit and bring about positive change.





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We are United in our drive to be great places to learn and great places to teach.

