

## 1. Background

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Big Life Schools Multi Academy Trust have two primary schools Longsight Community Primary and Unity Community Primary – both in Manchester, England. Longsight is a single form entry school attached to a Children’s Centre and nursery provision. It opened in 2013. Unity is a two-form entry school with an integrated nursery provision and community facilities. It opened in 2015.

## 2. Pupil numbers

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The tables below indicate number of pupils on roll. Longsight were over the total pupil number allocations and Unity, who are still growing, had 31 vacancies spread across all year groups. Unity is still a growing school with their first two form classes in years 5 and 6 to be experienced in the 23-24 and 24-25 academic years.

In 2023, for the first time since opening, Longsight had less pupils confirmed for reception places, than places available. This is a similar experience across all primary schools in Longsight and we believe it to reflect a temporary drop in birth rate. UCP had the highest number of confirmed reception places ahead of the school year, showing an improving trend.

Unity Nursery occupancy has started to increase to levels we were hoping before the pandemic. The setting continues to be impacted by the challenge of local authority school led nursery providers offering 30 hours free childcare when Unity and other private providers are only funded for 15 hours.

Table one: Longsight pupil numbers 2021-2, 2022-3

	Pupil Numbers		
	Capacity	21-22	22-23
Reception	30	31	29
Year one	30	30	29
Year two	30	29	31
Year three	30	30	30
Year four	30	31	31
Year five	30	32	30

Year six	30	30	31
TOTAL	210	213	211

Table two: Unity pupil numbers 2021-2, 2022-3

	Pupil Numbers		
	Capacity	21-22	22-23
Reception	60	51	44
Year one	60	51	49
Year two	60	55	58
Year three	60	61	53
Year four	30 in 21-22 60 in 22-23	32	58
Year five	30	30	34
Year six	30	30	33
TOTAL	330 in 21-22 360 in 22-23	310	329

### 3. Transience

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Transience within schools is unsettling for pupils who are entering and leaving mid-year. The impact on schools is often experienced in overall progress and outcomes, where pupils have arrived that have little or no English or understanding of the British education system. Longsight had previously experienced a reduction in transience as they reached capacity, however since 2021 the school has experienced an increase from 10% to 16% in 2022 and 13% in 2023.

Unity Community Primary experienced a spike from 30% to 36% in 21-22 reducing slightly to 30% in 22-23. Most new pupils entering and leaving are due to a change in family circumstances either moving to another ward in Manchester or across the UK, or families returning to native countries. This is in comparison to national mobility (14%) and indicates the challenges we continue to experience in Unity, which is in an area associated with accommodating a large proportion of international new arrivals into the city.

## 4. Demographics

Both schools remain diverse and reflect the communities where they are located. Both are in wards which experience high levels of deprivation. Unity is in Cheetham Hill, which sits in the top 1% of deprived wards nationally, and Longsight in the top 11%. There are also many families who identify as having English as an additional language (EAL) with over 80% of families across both schools identify as having EAL compared with 44% across Manchester and 21% nationally.

Among our family population the largest ethnic groups in Longsight are Pakistani (47.9%) and Bangladeshi (22.5%) largely unchanged year on year. Asian Pakistani (29.4%) is the largest ethnic group at Unity school and Nursery, with many Arab speaking families (19.1%). We are starting to see an increase in Black African families moving from the nursery to the school whereas some of these families were previously choosing to select a faith-based school.

	Unity Community Primary	Unity Nursery	Longsight Community Primary
	Proportion of cohort (%)	Proportion of cohort (%)	Proportion of cohort (%)
English as an additional language	89	62	79.8
Afghan	6	7.5	1.9
Arab	19	16.4	2.3
Asian: Indian	1	5	0
Asian: Pakistani	28	24	47.9
Bangladeshi		2.5	22.5
Black African	11	11.4	1.9
Black: Carribean	6	0	0.9
Black: Somali	0	0	1.4
Indian	0	0	2.3
Kurdish	5	3.7	0
White European – Italian, Romanian, Polish, Macedonian, Russian, Turkish	9	2.5	0.5
White British	5	8.9	1.9
White/Asian	0	1.2	0
White/Black African-Caribbean		4	0.5
Any other mixed background	9	7.6	0.9
Any other ethnicity – Bangladeshi, Chinese, Iranian, Iraqi, Korean, Malay,	2	1.2	12.2

Kashmiri Pakistani, Mirpuri Pakistani, Nepali			
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A measure of deprivation experienced by our families is eligibility for Free School Meals. At Longsight there are currently 33% and Unity it is 36.4% of pupils eligible for free school meals. This compares to 41% across Manchester and 23% nationally. These figures are increasing each year for both schools and, both schools have several families without recourse to public funds who are unable to claim free school meals. This guidance changed in January 23, and as a result the percentage may increase over time.

We receive additional funding (Pupil Premium Funding) to support educational outcomes for children eligible for Free School Meals and each school has a specific plan detailing how this funding is to be spent during the year. Longsight funding increased from £66k in 2021 to £97k in 2023, and Unity increased from £97k to £150k in the same period.

The increase in funding at Unity was invested in additional teaching and support staff, creating a nurture provision for children who required more one to one support whilst retaining their connection in their mainstream classes. The increase at Longsight enabled the school to continue to utilise Teaching Support staff employed as they were retained following a brief dip in PP funding the previous year. All funding was utilised in year.

## **5. Behaviour, attendance, wellbeing (Special Education Needs and Disabilities), safeguarding, accidents and incidents**

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Both schools are UNICEF Rights Respecting schools securing gold accreditation which is the highest level. This remains a golden thread across both schools ensuring children learn about rights by embedding it in all aspects of the school delivery, promoting and modelling rights respecting language, attitudes, and developing pupils to be ambassadors for the rights of others.

Linking into this is our approach to behaviour management across schools. Our new policy, Positive Behaviour and Relationships, incorporated rights and introduced zones of regulation across both schools. During the year Unity experience a spike in concerns with behaviours during key transition times. Next year behaviour incidents will be reported and monitored against new Key Performance Indicators to ensure close monitoring of the effectiveness of the system. Additionally, on review, it was found that some class teachers and support staff were implementing the behaviour system differently to other teachers. Schools addressed this by refining the policy and implementing a new recording system, which is then analysed weekly and termly to identify inconsistencies sooner.

Attendance at both schools has got worse since the pandemic, with many families choosing to keep their child off with minor illnesses, when previously they would have sent their child into school. Additionally, the rise of school term time holidays has increased across both schools with families either choosing to take longer summer or Easter holidays, beyond the term dates. A significant number of families chose to take longer holidays to see family members who were living in different countries, which was impacted during the pandemic.

The table below shows the comparison with local and national absence data, indicating attendance figures are slightly worse than the local and national picture, while persistent absence is above national average, but below Manchester's average, for both schools.

	Longsight			Unity			Manchester			National		
	20-21	21-22	22-23	20-21	21-22	22-23	20-21	21-22	22-23	20-21	21-22	22-23
Attendance	93.5	92.85	92.1	95.1	92.8	92.4		93.65	93.19		93.8	NA
Persistent Absence	18.4	23.32	22.11	13.1	23.13	18.8		29.05	22.41		18.3	NA

Both schools are experiencing an increase in children presenting with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities). This is particularly the case at Unity Community Primary, where the school experienced an increase in children with an Early Help Care Plan (EHCP), to a high of 12 in 22-23 academic year and 4 at Longsight.

Of these pupils there is an increasing need for pupils requiring special education needs provision, mainly experienced in Unity with children being supported whilst they await a space locally. This continues to present ongoing challenges due to the high level of resources required for these children to remain at school.

In 2022-23 we appointed a dedicated SENDCO teacher to work across both schools to support and co-ordinate provision. The SENDCO is supported at each school with a lead senior leader with overall responsibility for reviewing SEND provision including link governor roles who visit termly.

At the end of the academic year, we received a complaint from an assistant SENDCO at UCP. This was independently investigated by a local Head Teacher including a SEND review undertaken by the local authority. The investigation and review did not find any evidence to uphold the complaint but identified areas of improvement, which are either implemented or in the process of being implemented. We have arranged for the local authority to re-visit in June 2024 to review progress towards recommendations.

We use CPOMs to record all safeguarding concerns relating to children in our care. Both schools have trained Designated Safeguarding Leads and are supported by the group Safeguarding Lead. Safeguarding is monitored at different levels across the trust. Schools Designated Safeguarding leads deal with all concerns and incidents liaising with the relevant agencies and families as required, identifying a range of actions or interventions to support and address issues from escalating.

Local governing committees receive regular reports on safeguarding concerns and incidents with a link governor in both schools who will visit and check on safeguarding compliance and practice, including a review of self-assessment Section 175 audits that are completed and

submitted to the Local Authority annually. Both schools are experiencing an increase in children presenting with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities). This is particularly the case at Unity Community Primary, where the school experienced an increase in children with an Early Help Care Plan (EHCP), from 6 at the start of the academic year, a further 9 applications submitted by May, and a further 6 children identified as concerns and pending applications, by the end of the year.

### Accidents and incidents

There was one accident at Unity Community Primary this year, where a child fell on a tyre that was in the playground fracturing a bone. All tyres have now been removed from site to prevent re-occurrence. There were no significant accidents at Longsight.

The only significant incident throughout this year was at Unity where a parent was able to access the building where a door was not supervised. The parent was supervisee off site and a rota re-visited ensuring there is an employee at each door until drop off and pickup has ended.

## 6. Education

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**Reception GLD:** GLD in Longsight was lower than previous years. There were a number of additional challenges this year. Five children with SEND, three of which have an EHCP with a further one in progress, which is over 13% of the class cohort. Attendance rates were particularly challenging with only 87.5% for the class and 51% of pupils identified as persistently absent. The absences relate to term time holidays and sickness for x2 children who have significant health needs. Of the 30 children 12 were summer born, none of whom achieved GLD. We had the class teacher go off on MAT leave, replaced with an ECT who was supported throughout the year by SLT.

UCP have increased on last year's GLD of 27% to 62% with a new cohort of children. The challenges experienced last year were not as evident this year with the pupils moving from nursery able to access 30hrs of childcare, due to low demand in COVID. This enabled staff to work with the children for double the amount of time than they would normally have been allowed.

**KS1 Phonics:** Both schools experienced an increase from 2022 with Longsight achieving 82.8% and UCP at 75%. The improvements were positively impacted by the new phonics scheme implemented. Both schools achieved higher than Manchester (73.9%) and either the same or better than national (75%).

**KS1:** LCP did not achieve planned targets for all subject areas in year 2, except phonics re-check which was at 96.7% and only x2 children do not pass. Challenges across the school and re-deployment of TAs to reception during the year impacted on our ability to complete additional interventions. The biggest learning was the baseline data not being as accurate as

it could have been at the start of the year resulting in additional learning to fill in gaps being required.

UCP did not achieve targets set for reading and writing, however maths surpassed target. The data was impacted due to x4 international new arrivals entering the school in December who did not speak English, impacting on overall data across all areas including phonics re-check, which was 58.4%.

**KS2:** Both schools SATS results are showing an upward trajectory in all areas in comparison to last year. This wasn't experienced against Manchester or National averages with one or two areas witnessing a decrease on the previous years.

Next year's School improvement priorities include investment across the MAT in establishing systems and processes to support development of teaching and learning, given the number of new early career teachers in post across the Trust.

## End of Year Outcomes comparison 2019, 2022, and 2023

	Early Years Foundation Stage							
	Longsight 2019	Longsight 2022	Longsight 2023	Unity 2019	Unity 2022	Unity 2023	Manchester 2023	National 2023
Good level of development (all)	60.7%	56.7% -4%	44.8% -11.9%	62%	27.3% -34.7%	59.1% +31.8	58.5% +5.4%	67% +2%
Good level of development (SEND)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	N/A	24.4% +1.4%
Prime early learning goals	64.3%	73.3% +9%	48.3% -25%	32.7%	32.7% Same	59.1% +26.4%	65.5% +3.3%	75% +1%
Prime early learning goals (SEND)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	N/A	N/A
Specific learning goals (all)	60.7%	26.7% -34%	41.4% +14.7%	62%	27.3% -34.7%	59.1% +31.8%	56.4% +5%	67% +2%
Specific learning goals (SEND)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	N/A	24.4%



	Key Stage One							
	Longsight 2019	Longsight 2022	Longsight 2023	Unity 2019	Unity 2022	Unity 2023	Manchester 2023	National 2023
Year One phonics (All)	76.7%	60% -16.7%	82.8% +22.8%	69%	58.9% -10.1%	75% +16.1%	73.9% +5.5%	75% +4%
Year One phonics (SEND)	100%	0% -100%	0% Same	100%	33.3%	62.5%	48.5%	78.9% +3.9%
Reading (All)	70%	50% -20%	48.3% -1.7%	60%	44.9%	53.7%	61.4% +2.9%	68% +1%
Reading (SEND)	50%	0% -50%	0% Same	33.3%	0% -33.3%	37.5% +37.5%	N/A	32% +2%
Writing (All)	60%	50% -10%	51.7% +1.7%	50%	34.7% -15.3%	44.4% +9.7%	52% +3.5%	60% +2%
Writing (SEND)	33.3%	0% -33%	0% Same	0%	0% Same	37.5% +37.5%	N/A	22% +2%
Maths (All)	70%	46.7% -23.3%	51.7% +5%	63.3%	65.3% -2%	66.7% +1.4%	64.1% +4.3%	70% +2%
Maths (SEND)	33.3%	0% -33.3%	0% Same	100%	14.3% -85.7%	50% +35.7%	N/A	37% +4%
Phonics re-check	N/A	60%	96.7% +36.7%	N/A	58.9%	58.4% -0.05%	N/A	48.5%

	Key Stage Two							
	Longsight 2019	Longsight 2022	Longsight 2023	Unity 2019	Unity 2022	Unity 2023	Manchester 2023	National 2023
Y6 Reading (all)	67.9%	56.7% -11.2%	63% +6.3%	N/A	54.8%	56.3% +1.5%	67.9% -1.4%	73% -3%
Y6 Reading (SEND)	50%	0% -50%	50% +50%	N/A	20%	16.7% -2.3%	N/A	45% +8%
Y6 Writing (All)	64.3%	53.3% -11%	63% +9.7%	N/A	48.4%	56.3% +7.9%	61% Same	71% +1%
Y6 Writing (SEND)	33.3%	0% -33%	37.5% +37.5%	N/A	0%	16.7% +16.7%	N/A	34% +8%
Y6 Maths (All)	92.9%	50% -42.9%	67% +17%	N/A	54.8%	62.5% +7.7%	68.6% +1.9%	73% Same
Y6 Maths (SEND)	83.3%	0% -83.3%	50% +50%	N/A	20%	16.7% -2.3%	N/A	42% +8%
Y6 R/W/M combined (All)	53.6%	40% -13.6%	50% +10%	N/A	38.7%	40.6% +1.9%	51% -0.03%	59% Same
Y6 R/W/M/ combined (SEND)	33.3%	0% -33.3%	37.5% +37.5%	N/A	0%	16.7% +16.7%	N/A	24% +6%

## 7. Ofsted

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Longsight continues to be graded Good following their last inspection in 2018. Unity was inspected in May of this academic year with the school be rated as requiring improvement overall with quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, and personal development rated as good. The leadership and management and early years were identified as requires improvement with the main issues around how the early years curriculum links to the whole school curriculum and leaders' oversight of this which was lacking. Plans to address the issues identified are in progress and we are confident of achieving a good grade at our next inspection in 30 months' time (November 2025).

## 8. Community

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We secured funding from the Local Authority, which enabled us to deliver for the first time a Christmas play scheme, an Easter and Summer provision across both schools. Access remains limited to children and families eligible for Free School Meals with flexibility applied at the discretion of the provider.

### Play scheme attendance

	Longsight Community Primary	Unity Community Primary
Easter	34	31
Summer	41	31

Breakfast and afterschool provision continues to be available at both schools, returning to pre-pandemic service and prioritising pupils eligible for pupil premium. Both schools increased their cultural capital events with schools ensuring that all year groups were able to take part.

Trips and visits in Longsight included, for example; Picnic in the park, manchester museum of toys and artefacts, MOSI trip, imperial war museum VR Day, Benin museum, UNICEF soccer aid, theatre performance, sea-life, farm visit, visit to the Halle orchestra, including the year 6 residential to Ghyll Head.

In Unity there were similar events to Longsight with the addition of the following; Northern Powerhouse meeting, meeting the author, visits to Martin Mere, Crocky Trail, Jewish Museum, Bridgewater Hall, travelling farm, trip to the cinema.

	Longsight Community Primary	Unity Community Primary
Cultural visits and events	30	32
After School Clubs	22 (180)	Not available

After school clubs were available at both schools. Longsight offered the following clubs:

- Glockenspiel
- Board Games
- Eco and environmental
- Lego
- Sports
- Homework
- Spanish
- Steel pans
- Junior Jam
- Outdoor activities
- Tutoring

## **9. Capital improvements**

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We have commenced engagement with the Local Authority via Mcr Active, who have developed a partnership bid with the Football Association, for investment in sports fields to open free of charge to the public. Our Unity School site has been put forward for a MUGA with a bidding process to take place in 2022/23. If successful, this may see the development of Unity playing fields to make them more fit for purpose for children in the school and the local community.

Additionally, we have met with the Department for Transport who are exploring pilot schemes where community assets and buildings could be used to store electric scooters that could be offered, initially free, to local families, encouraging them to access work or training. No firm plans have been established, but they will consider our sites for potential hubs in the community.

We completed a small capital improvement to Unity nursery play area during academic year 2022/23.

## **10. Budget**

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Academic year 22-23 would have seen the trust revert to a lagged census for Unity Community Primary. Because we haven't been able to grow as quickly as we would like this would have resulted in the Trust receiving approximately £100k less income for pupils that were on roll. We submitted a business case to the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) requesting we remain on estimated pupil numbers for in year funding. This was approved with the recommendation that we engage with a School Resource Management Audit (SRMA, see below).

Budget performance for the year were better than forecast with additional income of 140k. Whilst additional costs amounted to £88k the additional income was mainly linked to the increased income for staff pay awards. This resulted in the Trust achieving a surplus operating budget of 140k or minus 55k after depreciation. We have modelled the financial

position of the Trust over a three-year period, which recognises the need to grow to sustain our existing central team costs in addition to demonstrating our influence and impact.

Within our budget setting process, we are required to seek approval from the ESFA any related party transactions over £40,000. We currently have an RPT with our sponsor, The Big Life Company. This contract has been in place since the inception of the Trust and provides the Trust with a below cost service to provide essential back-office functions including HR, payroll, finance, marketing and communications, health and safety and legal advice. A recent procurement of these services was completed, awarding the contract to The Big Life Company for a period of three years, which has been approved by the Related Party Transaction team at the ESFA.

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## **11. Audit and Compliance**

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During the year we employed a new Board Secretary, Teresa Chase. We have undertaken several internal and external audits this year including: a School Resource Management Audit (SRMA) with the Education Skills Funding Agency, Cyber Security and website compliance with Red Rambler and an external review of governance from a National Leader of Governance, commissioned by the ESFA.

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Following all audits, the Trust was provided with a list of areas to consider ensuring we comply with the updated Academy Trust Handbook (ATH) and our funding agreement. An action plan to address the actions raised has progressed with the completion of most actions with the remainder action outstanding to develop a Trust improvement strategy, due for first draft completion in November 23.

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## **12. Growth**

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Considering the Ofsted grading of requires improvement at Unity Community Primary it is unlikely that we will be able to explore growth via conversions of maintained schools until this is brought back to good grading.

Conversations with Special Education Needs schools continue to develop with plans to explore partnership working with Manchester Schools to develop relationships with a view to conversions in future years.

Additional growth areas identified include bidding for contracted services. We have submitted a bid to deliver Manchester Sensory Service and await the outcome of this.

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## **13. Governance**

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The MAT board met five times in the year, and the local governing committees' (which are advisory committees) met four times. The Trust Finance, Risk and Audit committee met five times this year. An AGM was held in January 23, reporting to the members of the Trust. During this meeting a further two members were also appointed increasing the number from 3 to 5.

## Attendance

### Finance, Risk and Audit Committee

- Andrea Heffernan: Committee Chair 6/6
- Colin Ralph: Trustee 6/6
- Liam McDaid: Trustee 6/6
- Fay Selvan: Trustee 5/5

### AGM roles and attendance

- Dolly Bedi 1/1
- Richard Scorer 0/1
- Tayyaba Javed 1/1
- Edna Robinson: Big Life Chair and Member 1/1
- Karina Carter 1/1
- Sayeeda Chowdhury 0/1

### MAT Trustees' roles and attendance

- Emma Perry: Chair of MAT 6/6
- Andrea Heffernan: Risk and Audit Committee Chair 5/6
- Annette Joseph: Trustee 0/2 Steeped down 9/2/23
- Fay Selvan: Trustee 5/5
- Lisa Brookes: Trustee 4/6
- Phil Trohear: Trustee 5/6
- Liam McDaid: Trustee 6/6
- Colin Ralph: Trustee 5/6
- Sandra Sinclair: Trustee 4/6

### Longsight Community Primary Local Governing Committee

- Liam McDaid: Chair and Trustee 4/4
- Alia Ali-Beag: Governor 2/4
- Charmaine Alman: Staff Governor 4/4
- David Grimes; Governor 3/4
- Holly Eckersley: Governor 2/4 Resigned 12/5/23
- Priscilla Nkewenti: Governor 3/4
- Sandra Saleh: Governor 3/4
- Sadaf Zahra: Governor 1/3 Resigned 3/5/23
- Jenna Saide: Parent Governor 1/1 Appointed July 23

### Unity Community Primary Local Governing Committee

- Matt Wallis: Chair and Trustee 4/4
- Ben Cook: Teacher Governor 3/3
- Iqra Akhtar: Parent Governor 3/3 Appointed 9/12/23
- Katy Burton: Teacher Governor 3/4
- Luana Cheng: Parent Governor 1/3 Appointed 9/12/23
- Nia Simpson: Governor MAT LEAVE

- Shaun Jackson: Governor 3/4
- Sundus Salam 3/3 Appointed 9/12/23
- Fay Selvan: Temp Chair 1/1
- Farheen Bizzari: Staff Governor Resigned 25/9/22
- Joanna Daley: Temp Chair (Appointed 4/11/22, Resigned 8/12/22)

Meetings were a mixture of online and in person.