

Inspection of UTC Swindon

Bristol Street, Swindon, Wiltshire SN1 5ET

Inspection dates:

3–4 March 2020

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending UTC Swindon. They attend regularly, are punctual and are smartly dressed. In most classes, pupils behave well and show positive attitudes and genuine interest in their studies. Pupils have chosen to attend the college because of its engineering and digital technology specialisms. Their learning is enriched through the high-quality resources available in the college and in the vast network of local and national employers that the college works with. Pupils particularly value the projects and assignments that employers set and the visits to various workplaces.

At breaks and lunchtime, the college is a calm and orderly place. Pupils, and their parents, comment on the good behaviour. Pupils report that bullying is very rare. Where there are any unkind behaviours, the vast majority of pupils comment how well staff work with pupils to resolve these. Consequently, relationships between pupils are positive. The number of exclusions has fallen sharply.

The quality of education is not yet good enough. The curriculum plans are well thought through and include many interesting, often practical, activities. However, in some classes, they are not always enacted well. Teachers pay too little attention on the basics of writing well and basic mathematics calculations, such as times tables, across subjects.

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

Across subjects, staff have planned their courses well. These allow pupils to build their subject knowledge over time. However, the quality of education is too variable.

Many pupils struggle to record their thoughts in writing. Across the subjects, pupils' writing is weak. They write relatively little and their spelling, punctuation and grammar are poor. Teachers do not insist on the same high standards as they do when pupils are completing practical tasks. Similarly, staff too readily accept poorly presented work or work that is not complete. Teachers assess pupils' work regularly, but they do not insist that pupils finish tasks or make corrections.

Reading has not been prioritised within the college. Some staff shy away from asking pupils to read aloud as pupils are not confident readers. Very few pupils read for pleasure. Leaders are aware of this and have set out their expectations, but this has not been rolled out to staff or pupils yet.

Teachers do not have the precise information they need about pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The information they have is heavily focused on pupils' personal development and too little on their academic needs. As a result, learning is not planned well enough to meet these pupils needs.

Over recent years, outcomes at the end of key stage 4 and the sixth form have been low. Current pupils are doing much better, although they are still not achieving as highly as they should.

Leaders have worked tirelessly to improve the college's work. This has been most successful in their work with employers. High-quality work experience placements, visits to employers, assignments that local and national employers have set, and mentoring have enhanced the college's work no end. Pupils engage fully in these and employers are delighted with UTC Swindon pupils. Pupils develop the personal attributes that employers are looking for. Consequently, the proportion of pupils who go on to apprenticeships in engineering or digital technology is high. Increasingly, sixth-form students are securing higher or degree apprenticeships. Similarly, year on year an increasing number of students carry on to undergraduate degrees at university. This is a good reflection of the high-quality careers advice and guidance that pupils receive.

The personal professional development course that all pupils follow prepares them well to survive and succeed in life. They learn about how to manage their money, particularly when they do not have much. They also gain some insight to different religions and cultures although this is not as strong as it should be. Pupils do not show a strong understanding of the world around them, now or in the past. Although some subject teachers try to include this in their teaching, there is no clear plan for developing an understanding or appreciation for this.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils are taught well about the risks that they might face in the community and online. This helps them to devise strategies to avoid harm.

Staff are suitably trained in safeguarding. They are aware of their role in keeping pupils safe and use their training to identify when things might not be quite right in a pupils' life. Leaders are effective in supporting pupils who need help. They work with the local authority and follow the procedures well. When other agencies do not respond quickly enough, college staff chase them up to make sure that pupils and their families get the support they need.

Occasionally, records are not as well organised as they might be. Leaders are aware of this and are seeking to improve their record-keeping to reflect the good practice that is taking place.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils struggle to write down what they know. Their work is poorly organised, and teachers' expectations of pupils' writing are not high enough. This means that pupils do not fully express all that they know or understand. Leaders should ensure that the school's common approach to literacy is fully implemented to ensure that pupils write well and express themselves clearly and accurately.
- The quality of education within and across subjects is too variable. This is leading to weaker outcomes in some classes and subjects than others. Leaders should take action to ensure that teachers receive the support and training they need so that the quality of teaching consistently meets leaders' own high expectations.
- Teaching is often not matched well enough to the abilities of pupils with SEND. Teachers do not have the information they need about the specific needs that these pupils have. Leaders should make sure that teachers have sufficient detail about the particular needs that pupils with SEND have. Leaders should also make sure that staff have the knowledge and training they need in subject-specific approaches to meet these pupils' needs.
- Due to the college's specialism and curriculum design, much of pupils' knowledge about the wider world, now and over time, is embedded in the curriculum through subjects. However, this is not as effective as it should be. Leaders should ensure that pupils have the cultural capital that they need to deepen their understanding and appreciation of the world around them.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	145155
Local authority	Swindon
Inspection number	10122319
Type of school	Technical
School category	University technical college
Age range of pupils	14 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	146
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	57
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sally Dicketts and Lee Nicholls
Principal	Jon Oliver
Website	www.utcswindon.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- UTC Swindon is a university technical college located in Swindon town centre.
- The school is part of Activate Learning Education Trust, a group of secondary schools, university technical colleges and a studio school in the Thames Valley. It is sponsored by Activate Learning.
- The school does not use alternative providers.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is slightly below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is higher than that typically found in secondary schools nationally.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We met with the principal, senior leaders, curriculum leaders and class teachers.
- The lead inspector met with four trustees and three members of the local governing committee and the trust's chief executive officer.
- We did deep dives in the following subjects: engineering, English, mathematics and science. These included discussions with subject leaders; visits to lessons; looking at examples of pupils' work; discussions with teachers and discussions with pupils.
- We reviewed the school's records of safeguarding checks and referrals to the local authority. We spoke with staff about how they keep pupils safe. We also asked the pupils about how they keep themselves safe and what to do if they have concerns.
- We observed pupils at breaktime and lunchtime.
- Inspectors took account of the views of the 33 parents who completed the Parent View survey. We also considered the views of 10 members of staff who completed Ofsted's online survey. The views of the 17 pupils who completed the pupil survey were taken into account.

Inspection team

Iain Freeland, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Martin Bennett

Ofsted Inspector

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