

Black Country UTC

Vernon Way, Sneyd Lane, Bloxwich, Walsall, West Midlands, WS3 2PA

Inspection dates

29–30 January 2013

| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Not previously inspected | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| | This inspection: | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Quality of teaching | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Leadership and management | | Good | 2 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Teaching in Year 10 and Year 11 does not help all students make good progress. The work set by some teachers does not capture the attention and interest of students.
- A small minority of students misbehave when they are not engaged in the lesson. This misbehaviour is not dealt with by teachers in a consistent way.
- Students' work is not always marked regularly or in enough detail by every teacher. As a result, students do not always know how to improve their work.
- Achievement in some subjects, for example mathematics, is not as high as it should be.
- In Year 10 and Year 11, boys achieve higher standards than girls.
- Attendance is below the national average although it is improving quickly.
- Fixed-term exclusions for poor behaviour are too high.
- Some students, and their parents and carers, do not know what to expect when starting the Engineering Diploma.

The school has the following strengths

- Although there are significant areas that require improvement, governors, school leaders and staff are managing the rapid development of this innovative engineering college well.
- Leaders are tackling the weaker areas of the college urgently, including by making checks on the less successful teaching.
- The best lessons highlight teachers' good subject knowledge. Their enthusiasm and commitment to individuals is valued by students.
- Students, particularly boys, are generally making good progress in engineering, information and communication technology (ICT), science and English.
- Students feel safe in the college. The extended college day allows for a wide range of excellent student-led projects to flourish, ensuring good opportunities for students to develop skills for independent learning and a sense of personal responsibility.
- The sixth form overall is good, following effective action to improve AS mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons and 16 teachers.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, leaders of support for students who need additional help, teachers and support staff, governors (including the Chair of the Governing Body), a sponsoring employer, and groups of students.
- Inspectors took account of 18 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) received prior to, and during the inspection and 26 staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors evaluated the college’s work, scrutinised data on students’ achievement, examined records relating to behaviour and attendance, and looked at evidence about the college’s own view of its work and plans for improving the college further.

Inspection team

| | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Brian Cartwright, Lead inspector | Her Majesty’s Inspector |
| Jonathan Woodyatt | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- The college was established in September 2011, as the second University Technology College (UTC), with lead sponsorship from Walsall Further Education College. Additional sponsors include the University of Wolverhampton and several local and international engineering companies. Students are admitted in either Year 10 or Year 12, and attend from a wide area of the West Midlands known as the Black Country. The college provides bus transport from various locations in the area.
- Students are admitted in Year 10 from a range of local schools and pupil referral units. For a minority of students, admissions are directed by Walsall local authority. A significant minority of students have gaps in their learning as a result of disrupted educational experiences in previous schools.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional funding for young people in the care of the local authority, for students known to be eligible for free school meals and those from service families, is above average.
- The proportion of students who are disabled or have special educational needs supported through school action is above average; the proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of students from minority heritage backgrounds is average. Few students have English as their second language. There are many more boys than girls.
- Students in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form must study engineering for a substantial proportion of the week. The college day is much longer than in most secondary schools.
- There have not been any public examinations in Key Stage 4 yet and there is no available data to compare with government floor standards.
- The school delivers engineering apprentice training courses for Walsall College.
- There are no students accessing alternative provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the quality of teaching in Year 10 and Year 11 (Key Stage 4) by:
 - setting work that is pitched at a level that engages and challenges all students
 - ensuring all teachers have the skills necessary to tackle low-level disruption within their own classrooms
 - marking work regularly and in detail in each subject so that all students can take immediate steps to improve their work.
- Devise and implement better strategies for improving the achievement of girls in lessons.
- Improve attendance and reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions by applying the behaviour, dress code, and rewards policies more consistently and collectively.
- Ensure that information, advice and guidance for prospective students and their parents and carers:
 - states the entry qualifications required for successful study at advanced level
 - is clear about the detailed content of the subjects being taught at all levels.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The progress students are making is not leading to high enough standards in every subject. In mathematics, standards are slightly below average and progress is not good enough because some students are not fully engaged in their work. Girls are not attaining the same standards as boys, with the exception of history.
- Students known to be eligible for the pupil premium are attaining less well than other pupils and their achievement requires improvement. Many of these students are starting from a very low base. However, regular assessment checks (every eight weeks) show that they are starting to catch up. This is in part because resources are used to provide one-to-one support and tuition for these students.
- Students who are disabled or have special educational needs are making good progress. This is because of very well focussed support, in-class intervention and careful monitoring by the coordinator for special educational needs. There is also very good support for students who are re-integrating back into mainstream schooling from pupil referral units. Their achievement, attendance and behaviour are steadily improving. In engineering and ICT, standards are above average in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. In English, standards are slightly better than average, representing good progress so far. This shows in their good literacy skills in other subjects, for example, in their written diploma projects and spoken presentations. In the separate sciences, students make good progress.
- An important strength of the college is 'enrichment' time; three hours per week for students to choose from a range of projects and activities. For example, the nationally successful 'Greenpower' electric race car is one such project. Students can choose their own project, for example, in making electronic musical instruments. The Duke of Edinburgh award scheme is popular. All these activities develop students' communication, leadership, team working and research skills very well.
- In the sixth form, achievement in the Engineering Diploma is high. Almost every sixth-former is studying this subject at advanced level, with good results already 'in the bag' from externally moderated assignments. In 2012, some students took AS level examinations but with mixed success; English results were good but mathematics results were very disappointing. The entry requirements to this course have been revised for the current Year 12 and students' progress is much better.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because the work set in some lessons in Key Stage 4 does not engage, challenge or enthuse the students. While most students comply with the instructions given in these lessons, they show little commitment and a few choose to chat with a partner, fiddle with equipment or blurt out comments meant to amuse their friends.
- However, teaching is consistently good in the sixth form. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. They have substantial expertise and experience in delivering training and instruction in vocationally based subjects. Teachers come from a wide mix of professional backgrounds, including school teachers, college lecturers and industry instructors.
- The best teaching quickly hooks students into the main idea of the lesson. After a brisk introduction, students get on with tasks promptly; these are often adjusted so that the level of difficulty reflects the abilities of each student. Students are quick to ask their own questions and debate each other's ideas with the teacher.
- In good lessons, teachers and other staff lead the students' learning but never do the work for them. For example, in a science lesson, every student had to attempt a 'dusting' of a forensic piece of evidence and carry out detailed measures of other evidence. An engineering lesson expected students to use technically very demanding computer aided design (CAD) software. Yet each student had a go and tried again if things did not work and was coached to discover

the right thing to do through the teacher's skilful questioning.

- Marking of students' work varies too much in quality. There are good examples of marking, especially in the coursework assignments, where teachers have provided detailed suggestions for further improvement. In some routine classwork, however, marking is done by 'ticking' work at random and does not offer a view on the quality of students' work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- While most students are eager to settle into work in lessons, some lose concentration and misbehave if the work set does not interest them. Many teachers deal with any sporadic inattention well, using a quiet word or skilful adjustment of the task, but others ignore it. In some instances, particularly in Key Stage 4, this can lead to steadily worsening behaviour and lead to a confrontation that interrupts the learning of the whole class. Students are sometimes removed from the class for an incident that began with something very minor. Students, staff and parents are aware of the negative impact of managing behaviour inconsistently.
- Most students surveyed by the school and the students spoken to by inspectors, say that they feel safe. They know how to report bullying, and who they can talk to, and are adamant there have been no homophobic or racist incidents to their knowledge. The college has recorded one racist incident since opening in 2011. Students and parents are confident that the college does deal with bullying once it becomes evident.
- Below average attendance, above average persistent absence and the high level of fixed-term exclusions are characteristics of the earlier school experience of many of the students. Now, at the college, almost all of the most vulnerable students are becoming better behaved and their attendance is improving. This is helped by good support from Walsall Education Welfare Service staff and the effective work of the college's own learning mentor.
- The behaviour of students in school between lessons, breaks and lunchtimes is calm, well-mannered and polite. The buildings are pleasantly decorated; students are friendly towards one another and welcoming to visitors.

The leadership and management

are good

- In a short time, governors and senior staff have successfully achieved the key objective of a establishing a specialist, and innovative, 14-19 college that teaches engineering and science to an advanced level; the outcomes for students in engineering are already good and productive partnerships with local and international engineering companies are in place.
- Although achievement, teaching and behaviour are not yet good overall, they are improving quickly. Leaders, and their staff, know what is working well and what is needed to improve further. Staff at all levels demonstrate good capacity for improvement. Early teething troubles with electronic communications, timetables and responsibilities are being resolved.
- While the college has a strong focus on engineering and science, some students, their parents and carers were unaware of the work involved in the new courses. Their expectations were that there would be more practical work and, consequently, some have expressed some disappointment. The college is extending opportunities for students to take additional qualifications in more practical skills in response.
- The technological focus of the college, and the specialist subjects taught, reflect the college's ethos of enterprise and innovation. Most of the projects, trips and range of visitors who come to the college to speak to students reinforce this. In addition, every day starts with lessons or an assembly that help develop personal, social and health awareness for all students. A detailed audit by every subject leader has identified a wide range of lessons where spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues are taught. Students contribute their views through a student-led 'executive board', which has already helped improve communications, the uniform and the way the rewards policy works.
- The pupil premium funding provides support staff for tuition and one-to-one intervention and

allows smaller teaching groups in English and mathematics. This has helped to keep students at the college and is improving their progress.

■ Arrangements for child protection and safeguarding meet the statutory requirements.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governance is good. The governing body places emphasis on monitoring and supporting improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. They receive frequent accurate reports on this and other key performance indicators from senior and middle managers. In the short time since opening, this data is indicating incremental improvements in teaching and achievement. It steers strategic planning and informs staff performance management. Teachers' pay is coupled directly to student progress and teaching quality at all levels. Not all teachers have received pay awards because not all teaching is good. School policies are reviewed on a planned cycle; for example, the safeguarding policy was reviewed last term with a detailed report provided to the governing body. It highlighted the need to be vigilant about site security and safety given the joint community use and the regular presence of adult apprentices within the college training facilities.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
|---------|----------------------|--|
| Grade | Judgement | Description |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 2 | Good | A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 3 | Requires improvement | A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | <p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> |

School details

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| Unique reference number | 136933 |
| Local authority | Walsall |
| Inspection number | 399880 |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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|---|------------------------------|
| Type of school | Academy UTC |
| School category | Non-maintained |
| Age range of pupils | 14–19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in the sixth form | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 175 |
| Of which, number on roll in sixth form | 112 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Jatinder Sharma |
| Principal | Chris Hilton |
| Date of previous school inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Telephone number | 01922 470763 |
| Fax number | Not Applicable |
| Email address | office@blackcountryutc.co.uk |

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