

The Elstree UTC

Studio Way, Elstree, Borehamwood, WD6 5NN

Inspection dates 12–13 May 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Requires improvement 3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement 3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement 3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement 3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement 3
Sixth form provision		Requires improvement 3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Students do not make enough progress in a range of subjects. School leaders have rightly prioritised raising achievement in English and mathematics. Although this has led to some improvement, similar improvements are not seen in science and several foundation subjects.
- The quality of teaching is inconsistent. It varies across and within subjects. Some specialist staff do not have sufficient understanding of how to teach well.
- At times, when students pay less attention, they are left unchallenged by teachers.
- Best practice is not shared widely to improve the consistency of marking and feedback to students.
- Procedures to assess students' progress lack clarity and rigour. Data are not used effectively to show how well students are doing in all subjects, or to identify those in need of additional support.
- Not enough is done to ensure that all students attend regularly and arrive to lessons on time.
- Insufficient curriculum time for personal, social and health education and ineffective tutorials mean that students are not given suitable opportunity to discuss matters of personal safety or relevant issues that prepare them for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders' monitoring is not sufficiently focused on improving those subjects where teaching is not leading to students making good progress.
- Currently, there are gaps in the leadership of some subjects and of the sixth form, which means that provision is not monitored as closely as it should be.
- The coordination of special educational needs is not good enough. Students who are disabled or have special educational needs, and some others who are reintegrating back into learning, do not receive enough support in lessons to help them progress.
- The sixth form requires improvement because the quality of teaching is too variable to secure good achievement and high enough success rates for students.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders are demonstrating the capacity to raise achievement. In a short space of time, they have secured rapid improvements to the quality of teaching in English and mathematics.
- The school's strong ethos, based on enabling students to acquire the skills needed for the arts and entertainment industry, is promoted well by staff and governors.
- Students enjoy the friendly, caring environment provided for them. Most behave well and enjoy school.
- Opportunities to fulfil and manage the technical aspects of performance add to students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.
- Governors have a clear vision of what they want the school to achieve and provide it with the strategic leadership needed to guide its further development.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 24 lessons, eight of which were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, two groups of students, two members of the governing body and with parents who asked to speak with an inspector.
- Inspectors took account of the 62 responses by parents and carers to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 41 questionnaires returned by staff.
- The inspection team observed the school’s work; scrutinised data about students’ achievement, behaviour and attendance; scrutinised students’ work; looked at documents used by leaders to check the school’s work; reviewed minutes of meetings of the governing body; and read reports of visits by the Department for Education.
- On the first day of inspection, arrangements made to host external examinations for Year 11 students meant that Year 10 students started the school day at 11.30am.

Inspection team

John Mitcheson, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Steven Tucker

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Sai Patel

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Paul O’Shea

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a University Technical College. It provides full-time, technically orientated courses for 14 to 19 year-olds that support the entertainment, film, television, theatre, visual arts and digital communications industries.
- The school opened in 2013. It is sponsored by The Meller Educational Trust, Elstree Studios and the University of Hertfordshire. It attracts students from a wide catchment area, some of whom have been excluded from their previous school or have missed periods of their schooling.
- Most students are White British. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is similar to the national average. Almost all of them speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium (government funding to support disadvantaged students) is similar to the national average.
- The proportion of students that are disabled or have special educational needs is below average.
- In 2014, a small proportion of students in Year 12 sat external examinations. This year, students will sit GCSE and A-level examinations for the first time.
- The school does not make use of any off-site provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - engaging and stimulating students' interest to prevent them from becoming less attentive
 - providing further support in lessons for those students who are disabled or have special educational needs, or are reintegrating back into learning.
- Raise achievement in science and in a range of foundation subjects by:
 - strengthening the teaching and leadership of science as a matter of urgency
 - providing intensive support for staff in foundation subjects where students are underperforming and monitoring and evaluating the impact this has on securing improvement
 - simplifying procedures to accurately assess students' progress over time in all subjects
 - ensuring that all students are punctual and regularly attend school.
- Improving the quality of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that revised procedures to assess students' progress are used systematically by all teachers and leaders to gauge accurately how well all students are progressing, and directing further support to those students who need it most
 - routinely monitoring lessons where data and scrutiny of students' work show that the quality of teaching is not leading to at least good progress, and taking decisive action to improve it
 - providing the coordinator of special educational needs with the support and resources needed to improve provision for students who are disabled or have special educational needs, and for those who need additional support
 - appointing a new leader capable of securing rapid improvements to the sixth form
 - providing all specialist staff with the training they need to increase their effectiveness
 - ensuring that the new leader appointed to drive improvements in science makes an immediate impact
 - revising the curriculum to provide a coherent and systematic approach to strengthening students' personal, social and health education, so that they know how to keep themselves safe and are fully prepared for life in modern Britain.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Senior leaders have been unable to secure consistently good teaching across the school. The short time available leading up to the school's recent opening, an over-reliance on specialist staff and difficulties in recruiting teachers in some subjects have limited the impact that leaders have had in driving improvements.
- Staffing has stabilised this year. Senior leaders have introduced procedures to monitor teaching, manage students' behaviour and plan the school's further development. However, they are not embedded or systematic. Senior leaders do not collate sufficient evidence to illustrate the school's effectiveness by thoroughly evaluating the impact of their work.
- Senior leaders acknowledge that the procedures to assess students' progress lack rigour. They do not have an accurate overview of how well students are achieving in all subjects. The percentages of students attaining at least a GCSE grade C in English and in mathematics are expected to be high this year but this is not reflected in assessment records, which present a confused picture of students' progress.
- The roles and responsibilities of senior leaders are unclear; some have extensive leadership responsibilities and others have fairly minimal ones. Responsibility for improving teaching has recently changed. Most, but not all, of the inadequate teaching is being tackled and staff training is beginning to secure better quality planning and lesson organisation. Faculty directors are increasingly engaging in monitoring teaching in the subjects they oversee but do not take full responsibility for raising achievement in their areas.
- Inconsistencies in the leadership of science has meant that little progress has been made in developing of the subject, improving teachers' effectiveness or ensuring that students have continuity in their learning. Concerns expressed by some students and parents about the changes in staffing and the detrimental impact these are having were confirmed by inspectors during observations of science lessons.
- Not enough time is allocated to students' personal, social and health education. Tutorial time is often wasted in idle chatter rather than purposeful learning. School leaders are not ensuring that all students gain a secure understanding of British values, democracy and the rule of law. There is not a coherent approach to teaching students about potential risks to their personal safety.
- Self-evaluation identifies most of the school's strengths and weaknesses and informs improvement planning. However, plans lack clear, measurable targets to enable senior leaders to gauge the impact they are having on raising achievement, and for governors to hold senior leaders to account for improving the school.
- School leaders are bringing about improvements. They have prioritised raising achievement in English and mathematics, where significant gains have been made. Good-quality teaching, coupled with an extensive programme of support for students after-school and at weekends, is enabling the majority of students to catch up and make good progress.
- The Principal promotes a strong school ethos based firmly on the shared vision and aspirations of the governors, the sponsor Trust and the University Technical Colleges movement. The curriculum provides students with a wealth of opportunities to combine academic study with creativity to gain essential skills needed for the workplace. Students really enjoy project work, and the chance to work with professional performers, for example directing and producing performances by MOBO artists. Links with the BBC also provide excellent work-shadowing opportunities for selected students.
- Senior leaders recognise that careers advice and guidance are underdeveloped. Plans are in place to improve this. Students' career opportunities within the industry are reinforced through visits to local studios and experts visiting the school to talk about film and theatre.
- Safeguarding arrangements, including the single central record, meet requirements.

- The school is forging links with parents and carers. A small number of parents asked to speak with inspectors to share their positive views. However, some complaints from parents and the number of negative responses on Parent View show that not enough is done to foster strong communication between the school and home.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body carries out its statutory duties effectively. Governors bring a range of proven educational experience and business acumen to the school. Their combined knowledge and experience of the arts, film and television industry, and of education and leadership, provide the expertise needed to forge strong partnerships and realise the school's vision for academic and vocational learning. They acknowledge that the school is at an early stage of its development and that more time and work is needed to make it 'match fit'. This includes renewing and ratifying some policies, and maintaining the school's website.
- Minutes of meetings show that governors hold senior leaders accountable for improving the school by asking challenging questions about its performance. At times, they are over-dependent on what senior leaders and external agencies tell them about the school's performance, rather than finding out for themselves. For example, they know what the pupil premium is spent on and that, according to current data. It is enabling eligible students to perform as well as others, but they have not checked for themselves to test that this really is the case. They ensure that the pay and performance of teachers are managed effectively and that safeguarding procedures are regularly checked.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. Inspectors found that in social and 'break-out' areas, students behave well, are respectful and well mannered. This contributes significantly to the school's caring, calm environment, and promotes the trust and professionalism expected of them in industry.
- Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is enhanced by opportunities to use the school's facilities to develop specialist skills in casting, photography, music, lighting and sound production. Many of them have taken part in dance, drama and theatrical events or worked with external organisations to produce professional video, music and graphics projects. This adds significantly to their enjoyment of school.
- In lessons, most teachers manage students' behaviour effectively. Attitudes towards learning are largely positive because students choose to come to the school to gain the knowledge and skills needed to work in the industry. The majority of students remain in school at the end of the day to engage in enrichment activities or complete their projects.
- Senior leaders can provide striking examples of how the school's ethos, its staff and its students have enabled individual students who have been excluded from their previous schools, or due to illness have missed a lot of schooling, to re-engage in learning, socialise with their peers and begin to achieve well.
- Students wear their uniform with pride. They usually arrive at lessons suitably prepared for learning. However, punctuality is lax. Too many students are late for school and also late for lessons during the day.
- At times, particularly when teaching is less effective, students' interest wanes and some lose interest. This is particularly noticeable amongst a small proportion of students who are less able or are reintegrating back into learning having missed lessons in their previous school.
- Very few students are excluded from school. Overall attendance is rising and is close to that found nationally. However, closer scrutiny reveals that the attendance of a small minority of students is too low and is preventing them from making sufficient progress.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement. The school is not meticulous in its

documentation of its checks and does not place enough emphasis on teaching students how to keep themselves safe. Students show some understanding of important safety issues, such as how to stay safe when using the internet, but aspects of personal safety are not adequately covered in the curriculum.

- Students told inspectors that they feel safe in school. They consider the school to be a community where they feel free from all forms of bullying as 'everyone gets on with each other'. They know who to talk to if they have personal concerns.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- School leaders judge the quality of teaching to be good. Inspectors found too many inconsistencies and that it requires significant improvement, especially in science and a range of foundation subjects.
- Since opening, senior leaders have taken decisive action to replace a large number of staff whose teaching did not meet their expectations. However, the school has some less effective and specialist staff, which contributes to the inconsistency of teaching. Although they possess sufficient technical knowledge, some are unable to impart this to students in a meaningful way that promotes good learning and progress. A small proportion of teaching is inadequate.
- In science, staffing changes have led to prolonged weaknesses in teaching that are having a detrimental effect upon students' progress. Errors in students' basic literacy, including spelling and grammar, are not corrected, and they are not picked up on poor presentation or incomplete work. It is unclear how teachers accurately assess how well students are doing because too much work is not marked.
- Marking is not done effectively in several subjects. Without regular and effective feedback, students are unsure about what to do to improve their work.
- There is no clear strategy to promote students' literacy and numeracy. Inspectors found very little evidence to show that subjects other than English and mathematics are committed to improving students' basic skills.
- Observations of teaching and scrutiny of students' work show that teaching is not enabling students to make good progress in a range of subjects. Clear timescales are not set to encourage students to work hard. At times, the same work is given to students of different abilities. More-able students complete these tasks quickly but have to wait until others have caught up.
- Staff training has focused on establishing the basic elements of good teaching. This has led to better quality lesson planning and management of behaviour. Other aspects, such as marking of students' work, providing sufficient challenge and pace to learning are developing at a slower rate.
- Good practice is not shared widely. For example, marking seen in English lessons provides students with good-quality feedback about their work. This rarely extends into other subjects.
- School leaders are improving teaching in some areas. In English and mathematics, specialist teaching in small classes regularly leads to good learning and progress. In drama and dance, good teaching enables students to achieve highly and produce high-quality work. Teachers are well organised, demonstrate good subject knowledge and provide suitably challenging work that stimulates and engages learners. Students value the extra effort teachers go to enable them to catch up on their learning and the revision sessions they provided to prepare them for GCSE examinations this year.

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- The school entered students in GCSE examinations for the first time this year. Currently, it only has its own progress data to indicate the achievement of students.
- The latest assessments indicate that the proportion of students in Years 10 and 11 who are on track to

make expected progress in English and mathematics is high. The proportion of more-able students exceeding expectations is also high. The percentage of Year 11 students expected to gain at least a GCSE grade C in English and in mathematics is well above what was achieved nationally last year.

- Observations of teaching in both subjects confirm that, overall, most students are making at least expected progress over time. However, in some other subjects assessment data and scrutiny of students' work does not fully support this because of the confusing presentation of data and variable quality of students' books.
- In science and in several other subjects, particularly engineering and film studies, data is less reliable. Forecasts of the proportion of students expected to achieve well in examinations this year are not supported by the quality of work recorded over time in students' books, or by the quality of teaching seen in lessons by inspectors.
- Assessment data show that the gap in attainment of disadvantaged students compared with their peers, and compared against other students nationally, has closed to the extent that they are achieving at least as well as others in English and in mathematics. Senior leaders feel that this has been achieved by investing in regular support for them after school, at weekends and during holidays. However, no detailed, thorough evaluation of the impact of this spending has been done to support this view.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs, and some other students who are reintegrating back into learning, do not make good progress because there is no additional support provided for them in lessons. On several occasions, inspectors found that the specific learning needs of these students were not being met.
- Achievement in some of the school's specialist areas is good. Inspectors noted students' good or exceptional achievement in dance, drama, creative writing, and theatrical hair and make-up. Students' portfolios of work in art, media and graphics are of a high quality. Students are being prepared well for events to perform in front of audiences, and to pursue further learning and careers in these areas.

The sixth form provision

requires improvement

- The variable quality of provision and the impact this has on students' learning noted in Key Stage 4 is also evident in the sixth form. The quality of teaching is inconsistent and this leads to students' underperformance in several subjects.
- At the time of opening, the school accepted students without minimal qualifications onto A-level courses. Results achieved in examinations in 2014 were generally below those found nationally. A significant number of students left school or did not continue their studies into Year 13.
- A small proportion of students join Year 12 without a GCSE C grade in English or in mathematics. Not all of them make enough progress because they are not provided with other basic qualifications that provide a stepping stone to learning before re-sitting the GCSE examination. This is beginning to improve following the introduction of Level 1 qualifications.
- There is no leader in place with full responsibility for driving improvements in the sixth form, and monitoring of sixth-form provision is not sufficiently rigorous.
- Tutors monitor students' attendance but records show that, for some, this is low. Students do not have enough regular contact with a tutor to mentor them on a one-to one basis, provide good-quality advice about future careers, oversee their work and ensure that they remain on track to achieve well.
- Currently, data shows that the majority of students in Years 12 and 13 are not meeting the targets set for them in art, physics and music technology. They are making better progress in drama, computing, hair and beauty, and creative writing.
- Several staff with industry experience use their expertise to model the professionalism expected of

students. They lead workshops that give students the opportunity to learn and practise the skills they need for the workplace. Students speak highly of these workshops and have used these skills during projects with external partners to produce performances and broadcast them using specialist media. These video broadcasts are of a high quality that meets the expectations of the industry. Many of these students aspire to progress into professional roles in producing film, theatre and television shows

- A small proportion of students in Years 12 and 13 have benefited from opportunities to gain experience of the workplace through temporary placements.

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

Unique reference number	139416
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	450042

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	University technical college
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	420
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roger Morris
Principal	Moira Green
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0208 3866220
Email address	principal@elstreutc.co.uk

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