

Energy Coast UTC

Blackwood Road, Lillyhall, Workington, Cumbria CA14 4JW

Inspection dates

1–2 February 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The progress pupils make, across the whole college, is variable because the quality of teaching is variable. The progress pupils make in academic A levels and GCSE geography and French require most improvement.
- Leaders and teachers do not have a clear enough understanding of pupils' starting points in their learning, because they have not yet found a good system to establish what these starting points are. This makes it difficult for leaders to measure pupils' progress and for teachers to know precisely where to pitch their teaching.
- In the sixth form, opportunities for students to take part in high-quality work experience and develop employability skills are improving but still underdeveloped. Leaders do not evaluate the impact of these programmes.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning require improvement. Some pupils do not attend well enough. When teaching is not good, pupils let their attention wander.
- A large proportion of pupils who join the college in Year 10 start with low basic skills. Some teachers do not do enough to ensure that pupils catch up.
- Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what their pupils can achieve. Therefore, they do not plan well for the different ability range in their class. Some teachers plan activities that do not interest pupils and so their attention wanders. Often teachers accept inaccurate and untidy work from pupils.
- The curriculum is not coordinated well enough to ensure that work in discrete subjects supports learning in others. Within some subjects pupils sometimes learn pockets of information and are not given opportunities to apply this knowledge.
- Systems to evaluate the quality of teaching are improving. However, not all courses are evaluated with sufficient frequency to enable improvements to be short and sharp.

The school has the following strengths

- According to staff, pupils, parents and inspection evidence, the new principal has transformed the college. There is still much to do. However, a good foundation has now been secured to enable continued improvement.
- Pupils' achievement is improving across all courses and year groups. All other aspects of the college are improving.
- Pupils' welfare, their personal development and safeguarding are all strong.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the accuracy and quality of information the college uses to assess pupils' skills and understanding on entry to the college so that:
 - aspirational targets can be set for pupils
 - teachers can more quickly understand what pupils know and need to learn
 - the progress that pupils make can be evaluated accurately throughout their courses
 - teachers and leaders can quickly identify pupils whose progress slows and intervene to ensure that these pupils make better progress.
- Improve the progress made by pupils throughout the college by ensuring that all teachers:
 - actively promote the improvement of pupils' literacy, numeracy and oracy skills
 - have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and insist that pupils produce work with a high regard for precision and accuracy
 - plan learning activities that will deepen the understanding of pupils of all levels of ability and ensure that they are more fully engaged and enthused
 - fully embrace the culture of the university technical college and plan learning activities that link better with other subjects, helping pupils to realise their aspirations.
- Continue to improve pupils' attendance, paying particular attention to disadvantaged pupils and those who are persistently absent.
- Through improved monitoring, ensure that pupils experience the same quality of teaching and learning while at partner training providers as they experience in the college.
- Further develop provision for pupils to learn from high-quality work experiences and improve their employability skills. Evaluate the impact of these experiences throughout and at their conclusion.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leadership and management require further improvement because too much responsibility currently lies with the principal. The impact the recently appointed principal has had on improving all aspects of the college is considerable. The new principal is introducing rigorous systems of accountability and is relentless in her ambition to drive up standards. She has carried a heavy load and inspired others to improve the quality of their work. The recent staffing and leadership restructure will be implemented very soon. There have been considerable personnel changes in teaching and leadership. Consequently, many leaders will be or are new to post. They are enthusiastic and have demonstrated success in their previous roles. However, it is too early for those recent appointees to have contributed significantly to college improvement.
- Many systems are at an early stage of development. Leaders of subjects are currently grappling with the best way to establish what pupils know, understand and can do when they start at the college. There are examples within the college of some subjects doing this well, but not all do so. Consequently, some teachers cannot plan programmes of learning well enough, ensuring that pupils get off to a fast start. Nor can leaders and some teachers confidently set challenging achievement targets or accurately monitor the progress pupils make.
- Leaders are developing good systems to monitor, evaluate and so improve the quality of teaching. The quality of teaching within the college is monitored closely. However, leaders are less confident in knowing how well their pupils are taught when they attend classes at their partner training providers. By contrast, the college monitors closely the achievement, attendance and safety of all its pupils who attend alternative provision.
- The principal has wasted no time in improving all aspects of the college quickly. The impact of her work can be seen in improving teaching, and pupils' achievement and attendance. To achieve this, she has made a considerable number of adjustments to staffing and structures. The vast majority of staff currently at the college fully support the principal in the actions she has taken to improve the college. Teachers say that they have a sense of purpose and direction. They say that the systems to monitor their work are rigorous and they are held regularly to account. Teachers are quick to point out too that they are well supported and they feel that their careers are being developed. The performance of all staff is monitored rigorously. Only staff who have achieved challenging targets are rewarded through advancement in the pay structure. Teachers say that there is a coordinated approach to improvement and key decisions are made exclusively on what is best for pupils.
- Parents, pupils and staff are united in the view that the college is very much improved because of the excellent work of the current principal.

- The curriculum is well matched to the needs and aspirations of pupils. Almost all pupils leave the college to start careers in engineering or related industries. A large proportion move directly onto apprenticeships with local companies. Pupils' personal development and leadership skills are developed well through a good range of enrichment opportunities. These include the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, Combined Cadet Force and the active citizen group. Pupils have opportunities to take part in sport. Staff organise special events, including cultural activities, to broaden pupils' experiences. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong because the curriculum is rich and teachers act as good role models.
- The college leaders evaluate how well they spend additional funding the college receives for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The quality of this evaluation is improving. A new coordinator for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was appointed last month.
- The college's culture and ethos have been carefully managed to ensure that all pupils feel safe, are happy and can make progress. Although girls form only about a quarter of the pupil population, they say that they feel fully involved, well supported and have a very positive experience. Pupils and staff ensure that no one experiences discrimination or is made to feel inferior. In this college, pupils can be who they want to be.
- Pupils are well prepared for their next stages in education or training and for life in modern Britain. Their personal development is strong. Pupils are well behaved and personable. Most talk confidently to adults. They receive appropriate and impartial careers advice. Pupils have very close and frequent contact with employers. They learn at an early stage what it is like to work in an engineering, or similar, environment. Their levels of achievement and their basic skills are improving.
- The principal welcomes external evaluation and responds positively to it. The Baker Dearing Educational Trust monitors the college's performance once a term and offers good support. The trust has an accurate view of how well the college is performing and offers well-considered guidance.

Governance of the school

- The governors have undergone considerable change. They are now well equipped to ensure that the college improves. Between them, governors have a diverse range of skills to evaluate how well the college is performing in terms of ensuring financial probity, pupil safety and learning.
- Governors offer good support to the principal and hold her to account rigorously.
- The governors have recently set up a committee with the remit to further improve employer engagement. It is too early to evaluate the impact this group is having.
- Governors have given freely considerable amounts of time and expertise. They are now making a very valuable and important contribution to the improvement of this college.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Systems to protect pupils have been good over the short life of the college. This is because pupils' welfare and care have been very well managed from the start. Staff are vetted rigorously. The site is secure. Pupils know whom they can turn to if they have a personal concern or are concerned about another pupil. They say that there are many staff with whom they would confidently raise concerns. Staff are well trained and well informed. They know what to look for and how to react to ensure that pupils are safe.
- The college places a very high priority on safeguarding. Leaders demonstrate tenacity in following up concerns and ensuring that other agencies play their part.
- Pupils are taught well how to be safe in different environments, and when using a very wide range of tools and equipment, including when using the internet.
- The full range of learning environments, learning activities and movement of pupils are assessed for risk. The college does all it can to minimise risk.
- The principal fully understands her responsibility to ensure that pupils are safe and has taken decisive action to achieve this.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is variable, but improving quickly. Where teaching is not good, teachers fail to take pupils' prior understanding into account. This often leads to teachers not having high enough expectations of what their pupils can achieve. These teachers tend to focus too much on completing tasks or giving pupils strategies to answer questions, rather than helping them deepen their understanding and applying their learning to solve problems.
- Teachers do not discuss their curriculum and their topics with each other often enough. This leads to missed opportunities to coordinate their teaching, to ensure that pupils' learning matches and supports other courses and qualifications.
- Standards are accepted in some subjects that would not be tolerated in others. This leads to variation in the quality of work that the same pupils produce. For example, graphs in pupils' science books are untidy and inaccurately drawn.
- Pupils generally start the college with weak basic skills. There is variation in the extent to which teachers systematically develop these skills. This prevents more rapid progress. Too many teachers are reluctant to improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, although there are some very good examples of where they do. Pupils are more confident in talking to another person than they are talking to groups of people. This reluctance to express themselves also restricts pupils' ability to form clear ideas and strengthen understanding.

- Learning is strong in English, science and engineering. Teachers in these subjects motivate the pupils by ensuring that topics are engaging and taught in an interesting way. There is a sense of energy and industry in their classes. Pupils work hard, demonstrate pride and care in their work and enjoy their learning. In these subjects, pupils learn quickly. They spend little or no time on work that is insufficiently challenging. Teachers pitch learning at the right level for different ability groups in their lesson, encouraging pupils to move on quickly once they have understood the point or developed the skill.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The college's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- All staff actively promote pupils' welfare and safety.
- Pupils are encouraged to develop positive attitudes about themselves and others. Pupils are at ease while in the college, no matter what their gender or background is. Pupils' emotional and mental health are taken very seriously and actively promoted. As pupils progress in the college, their self-confidence and leadership skills increase. This makes a significant contribution to improving their employability skills.
- Pupils develop a keen sense of what is safe and what is not. The college teaches pupils how to be safe, particularly when at work, in the community and when using social media. Pupils take responsibility for their own safety and look out for each other. Relationships between pupils and staff are very positive. Pupils feel able to bring concerns to the attention of staff. This is a significant factor in improving pupils' personal development and their welfare.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Last year, pupils' attendance was weak. The new leadership team responded to this and has implemented good procedures to improve attendance. These are having a positive impact and, overall, attendance is improving. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils still lags behind that of other pupils. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent continues to be larger than that seen nationally for all year groups apart from Year 11.
- In classes and workshops, pupils are calm and polite. Where teaching is strong, pupils enjoy their learning and work enthusiastically. This contributes significantly to strong progress. However, too often in other classes, progress slows because pupils choose to work slowly and do not fully concentrate on their task.
- Around the college, pupils behave very well. They socialise well and show respect for each other and adults. Pupils respond quickly to requests from staff. The atmosphere is calm and purposeful.

- Support for pupils who occasionally struggle to behave well is effective. Incidents of misbehaviour are reducing and it is rare for pupils to misbehave repeatedly.
- Pupils say that they never feel intimidated and that there is no bullying. There are two incidents of bullying recorded by the college. There is strong evidence to show that the college responded promptly and effectively when these bullying incidents were brought to its attention.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Published information about how well pupils achieve in secondary schools measures progress from the start of Year 7 to the end of Year 11. Since pupils start this college in Year 10, using published information to evaluate the quality of learning in this college would be misleading because pupils have had two years, not five, at the college.
- Standards are low for pupils when they start courses in both English and mathematics in Year 10.
- In 2016, when the first cohort of Year 11 pupils sat external examinations, generally they did not do well. Progress for current pupils is improving. However, progress in French and geography continues to lag behind that in other subjects.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils in 2016 was weaker than for other pupils nationally and other pupils within the college. These differences in the performance of disadvantaged pupils are diminishing for current pupils. The progress of the most able disadvantaged pupils is improving more quickly than for other groups. This demonstrates more effective use of additional funding that the college receives to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.
- Last year, only low-ability learners in mathematics exceeded the attainment of similar pupils nationally. Pupils' progress in mathematics is improving. The current Year 11 pupils are showing much stronger progress than pupils made last year. However, the current Year 10 pupils are not progressing quite as well.
- There was a similar pattern in English, with only the low-ability pupils exceeding national levels. In English, progress is improving in both Year 10 and in Year 11 for pupils of all abilities.
- Overall, pupils are making better progress than they did in previous years. Girls' improvement is more rapid than that of boys, and this is closing the gap in performance that existed last year.
- The college has recently reviewed which pupils are identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a consequence, the number of these pupils on the college roll has reduced considerably. This makes any comparison of achievement between those identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities last year, and this year, unreliable. The progress of this group of pupils currently on roll is similar to the progress of others, when taking their starting points into account.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Leaders and managers of the sixth form have an appropriate appreciation of the requirements of the programme that students are required to study. However, leaders do not have appropriate systems to keep informed about the progress that students make, especially for students on vocational programmes.
- Governors have very recently recruited a new vice-principal to prioritise raising standards in the 16 to 19 study programme. Many of the initiatives that have been, or are going to be, introduced are laudable. However, there has not been sufficient time to demonstrate improvement in students' progress.
- Leaders and managers have been successful in ensuring that a large proportion of students who complete their programmes gain an apprenticeship in the field that they are studying at the college. The remaining students progress to further education, employment or a place at university, consequently fulfilling their short-term career objectives.
- The standard of teaching is improving. Some teachers ensure that students develop skills and understanding that are required by the course. Some teachers also work hard to link learning across subjects, but not all do. For example, students in construction studies use a wide range of mathematical techniques to approximate the costs of making a product. They use ratios and proportions well. Conversely, a few teachers lack sufficient command of skills in writing to improve students' literacy. Too often, teachers neglect to correct spelling, grammatical and numerical errors. This fails to promote the high standards that the principal expects and to give the guidance students need to improve their basic skills.
- Some teachers do not provide learning activities that meet the requirements of students. Too often, planning and the execution of learning fail to challenge the most able students to improve their existing skills or to complete work to a high standard. For example, in one engineering course, students complete worksheets that do not allow most-able learners to attempt more challenging questions.
- In 2015/16, too many students did not progress well on most academic qualifications, particularly on AS courses in environmental science, core mathematics and applied science. In the past, too many students started studying a mathematics course without having built a secure enough understanding of mathematics at GCSE level. Students undertaking vocational qualifications achieved significantly better than their peers did nationally.
- Currently, more students are making expected progress in their qualifications. This is because of improved teaching, which has been inspired by the improved leadership of teaching and holding teachers more to account for the progress their students make.
- Leaders and managers have developed a wide range of highly effective industrial links with employers in the engineering and construction sectors. Many of the more prominent and active employers engage in the design of the curriculum and develop enrichment activities to further improve students' vocational and employability skills.

- Students receive a good standard of careers information, advice and guidance throughout their time at the college. Leaders have ensured that there is appropriate information and guidance through a well-planned schedule of internal and external speakers. Local employers, enterprise and employment charities, and local training providers all contribute to a varied assembly programme. This prepares students well for the world of work and allows them to be ready to progress to their next stage, whether that be an apprenticeship, securing employment or going to university.
- Leaders and managers have not prioritised the monitoring of the improvement of students' employability skills. Consequently, they do not have an accurate understanding of the progress students are making in this important aspect of their studies.
- Students in the sixth form display the same standards of behaviour as their younger peers display in key stage 4. The good procedures and approaches that keep younger pupils safe and promote their welfare operate across the whole college.

School details

Unique reference number	140600
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10024086

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

Type of school	Technical
School category	University technical college
Age range of pupils	14 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of students in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	267
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	72
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barbara Stephens
Principal	Cherry Tingle
Telephone number	01900 606446
Website	www.energycoastuttc.co.uk
Email address	enquires@energycoastuttc.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- University technical colleges (UTCs) are usually smaller than average schools for 14 to 19 year-olds. They focus heavily, but not exclusively, on science, technology, engineering and mathematical subjects. All their technical, academic and practical learning is designed to be applied in the workplace. A UTC's specialism usually reflects the local economy. Energy Coast UTC specialises in engineering.
- Throughout the first two years of the college's existence, there was significant disruption in staffing at principal and senior leader level. The current principal has been in post since September 2016.

- There has also been significant turnover of staff.
- The college works with two partner training providers who offer engineering and construction courses. They are Gen2 and the Lakes College.
- Two pupils attend alternative provision (at West Cumbria Learning Centre) full time and two attend part time.
- The college is formally supported by the Baker Dearing Educational Trust, whose focus is on promoting and supporting new and existing university technical colleges.
- The college does not meet requirements on the publication of information on its website about the special educational needs and/or disabilities report, the college curriculum and the publication of results. Governors' attendance at meetings is not recorded.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held meetings with the principal, vice-principals and a consultant member of staff.
- Inspectors also met with groups of pupils and three members of the governing body.
- Inspectors met with a group of teachers and middle leaders.
- The lead inspector spoke to two representatives of the Baker Dearing Educational Trust.
- School documents were scrutinised, including safeguarding checks, information about pupils' achievement and records of checks on the quality of teaching. Inspectors also visited classrooms with leaders to speak with pupils, look at their books and observe their learning.
- One inspector visited both partner training providers.
- Inspectors examined child protection information.
- There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, for the inspectors to consider. They took account of responses from 19 pupils and 22 staff to inspection surveys. Inspectors considered the views of the 35 parents who texted their comments.
- Inspectors were aware of an investigation related to this college being made by the Education Funding Agency.

Inspection team

Neil Mackenzie, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Paul Cocker	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jane Jones	Her Majesty's Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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