

# University Technical College Norfolk

Old Hall Road, Norwich, Norfolk NR4 6FF

## Inspection dates

7–8 March 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

- Pupils' progress varies across subjects and key stages because the quality of teaching is inconsistent.
- Good progress in engineering and mathematics is not matched in a range of other subjects.
- A-level results were low in 2016.
- Not all teachers use questioning effectively or check pupils' work to make sure that they understand and are working hard enough.
- Planning does not ensure that the different needs and abilities of pupils are fully met, including those who are more able, or have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Persistent absence is high in both key stages.
- The school's procedures to manage behaviour are not applied consistently. A minority of pupils disrupt the learning of others.
- Leaders do not analyse thoroughly information about pupils' misbehaviour or absence to spot trends and make improvements.
- Leaders of some subjects and pupils' pastoral care are new and their effectiveness is not yet clear.
- Until recently, pupils joining the sixth form have not been advised well about suitable A-level studies.
- Pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education is underdeveloped.

### The school has the following strengths

- Clear, coherent leadership from school leaders has established a new school promptly.
- Governors oversee effectively the school's strategic development.
- Standards achieved in engineering are high.
- Participation in high-quality engineering projects, extra activities and additional learning enriches pupils' education.
- All Year 13 students moved into further education, apprenticeships or employment in 2016.
- Pupils enjoy school. They feel it is a safe, calm and friendly place to be.
- Safeguarding is effective.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Gain greater consistency in the quality of teaching by:
  - ensuring that the school's agreed procedures for managing behaviour are applied consistently
  - planning learning that meets the different needs of pupils, including the most and least able, and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Raise achievement, particularly in A-level courses and some foundation subjects, by:
  - ensuring that pupils are suitably prepared for learning and are ready for the rigours of their chosen subjects
  - using questioning much more effectively to test pupils' knowledge and understanding, and making regular checks of the quality of their work during lessons
  - holding staff fully accountable in subjects where pupils' achievement is low.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that newly appointed leaders in some subjects and pastoral roles establish themselves promptly so they can make a full contribution to school improvement
  - analysing in depth the information collected about pupils' behaviour and attendance to spot patterns and trends, and using this information to reduce incidents of poor behaviour and persistent absence
  - managing the time allocated to developing pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship (PSHC) education more effectively.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Senior leaders have overseen effectively the establishment of a new school in a short space of time. The school faced some significant challenges in its first two years. Leaders acknowledge that not all of their decisions about the curriculum, and the advice about courses offered to pupils, were the right ones. Changes in staffing, including the departure of some senior leaders, added to this period of turbulence.
  - Leaders evaluate the school to be good. Inspectors found insufficient evidence to support this view. The school has recovered from the challenges it faced during its first two years, and is clearly improving. However, teaching remains inconsistent. This leads to variable progress across a range of subjects. Low-level disruption in lessons has not been eradicated. Persistent absence rates remain high.
  - Recent changes in leadership are helping to build further capacity to secure improvements. This needs more time to develop fully. A lead practitioner in science took up his post this year. Leaders responsible for child protection, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils are also new this year. Some pastoral responsibilities, such as monitoring and evaluating records of behaviour and attendance, are not carried out thoroughly.
  - The principal, with the full support of the governing body, has a clear vision for the school's further development. He has prioritised strengthening teaching. Staff are held more accountable. Tough decisions have been made to challenge underperformance. Leaders' monitoring and evaluation have identified where most of the strengths and weaknesses lie, and informed further training, but this has not resolved the inconsistency evident in lessons.
  - Vocational learning in engineering, complemented by mathematics, science and computing, underpins the school's curriculum. Pupils enthuse about this, describing it as the main reason for choosing the school. Excellent specialist facilities enable pupils to thrive in engineering. Good-quality guidance and advice, and regular visitors from industry, help pupils to understand the range of career opportunities available to them.
  - The curriculum is enhanced by an excellent range of enrichment opportunities and interventions to accelerate pupils' learning and progress. These activities enable pupils to consolidate and extend their knowledge and understanding in science, mathematics and engineering. Strong links with local industry mean that the quality of project-based learning in engineering is exceptional.
  - Pupils have fewer opportunities to develop their PSHC education. 'Pod' sessions each morning include a range of activities to promote pupils' personal development, and their moral and social understanding. There are too few opportunities to develop their understanding of health, relationships and the different cultures and beliefs in modern Britain and the wider world.
- A small proportion of parents and carers responded to Ofsted's questionnaire during

the inspection. Overall, they are happy with the school. One parent commented, 'The school has a distinct character. It treats its pupils as adults, giving them greater responsibility over their learning. Pupils respond well to this. My son has thrived here and I would recommend it to other parents.'

## **Governance of the school**

- Governors bring a wealth of knowledge and experience of education and industry to the school. They have worked effectively to steer the school's strategic direction, and secure its long-term future. Plans are in place to join the Norfolk Academies Trust later this year.
- Well-established links with a federation of other schools in the area enable governors to call upon support services to manage finances, staff and the school site, leaving leaders to focus on raising achievement.
- Governors are ambitious. They have set the aspirational target of making the school the highest performing university technology college in the country. To help them achieve this, they have forged strong partnerships with local businesses and employers to enrich the curriculum and give pupils real-life experiences of the workplace.
- They scrutinise the school's work and challenge leaders to make improvements. At times, they are over-reliant on what they are told about the school's performance. For example, they have accepted leaders' evaluations and other external reviews of the quality of teaching but have not checked what impact this has on pupils' overall achievement.
- Governors ensure that statutory duties are met. They do not ensure that all additional funding is used well enough. Funding to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities does not ensure that they make sufficient progress because currently, pupils are not supported well enough in lessons. The pupil premium was used effectively to enable disadvantaged pupils to make similar progress to others last year.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All the required safeguarding checks are carried out when recruiting new staff.
- Staff training is up to date, including 'Prevent' duty training to spot those at risk of radicalisation or extremism. The newly appointed coordinator of special educational needs is not yet fully trained.
- Oversight of the school's child protection arrangements changed this year. The designated lead has a good understanding of the school's caseload and the actions needed to protect pupils. He acknowledges that some records need updating to show fully the impact of actions taken to keep pupils safe.
- Pupils are kept safe in school. The site is secure. Posters and notices around the school remind pupils of health and safety procedures, and the risks attached to using social media and the internet.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- In the school's first two years of operation, leaders have worked hard to provide pupils with good teaching. However, staffing changes and recruitment issues have undermined this. Currently, teaching is inconsistent within and across subjects, which affects the progress pupils make.
- The strengths evident in teaching in mathematics and engineering, and some science, are not matched in other subjects. Changes have been made to improve the quality of teaching in some foundation subjects where results were low last year.
- There are very few teaching assistants to work with the number of pupils needing additional support. Instead, teachers are expected to plan learning that meets the different needs of pupils. Inspectors found that teachers do not do this well enough. Not all of them plan learning that stretches the most able. Some tasks, such as copying and revision exercises, are far too easy.
- Too often, less able pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities struggle to cope because tasks are too difficult for them. Without the additional support they need, they ease off and their progress slows. At times, a small minority of them lose interest and disrupt the learning of others.
- Expectations are not always high enough. Work in pupils' books is often poorly presented; some is left unfinished. Procedures to challenge poor attitudes towards learning are not applied consistently. In some lessons visited by inspectors, pupils did a minimal amount of work. Teachers did not involve them during questioning and discussion, or look at their work to check that they were working hard enough.
- Good teaching in mathematics and engineering ensures that the most able pupils are suitably challenged. Teachers are well organised, expectations are high, relationships are strong and learning is effective. They make regular assessments to track pupils' progress, and identify those at risk of underachieving. Technology is used well to model tasks and illustrate what pupils need to do. Pupils are given time to work together to find solutions and complete their work promptly. In accordance with the school's own policy, the most able pupils are used well to help others who are 'stuck' or need further explanation.
- Where learning is most effective, teachers use a range of techniques to actively engage pupils and check their understanding. For example, during questioning in mathematics, pupils wrote their answers on mini-whiteboards to show teachers that they understood. Pupils helped others to understand by demonstrating their working-out on the interactive whiteboard. Some were asked to read out their work, ensuring that they made sure that they had something to share with others.
- An additional lesson is taught on three afternoons each week. This includes revision for selected pupils wishing to improve their target grades, and opportunities to extend their interest in technology. Exceptional subject knowledge, strong relations and understanding of exam requirements combine to make these sessions high-quality learning experiences for pupils.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Not all pupils join in Year 10 with the understanding that they are in school to learn engineering. Daily tutorials help them to adjust to the school's expectations of them. Uniform checks ensure that pupils understand the importance of presenting themselves smartly for the workplace. Pupils are shown how to write their curriculum vitae, and prepare for interview. There are few strategies in place to provide support for those who arrive with underdeveloped literacy and numeracy skills.
- Leaders' actions to raise overall attendance have led to some improvement. Attendance is broadly in line with the national average. Less success has been achieved in tackling persistent absence. Leaders have strengthened their monitoring and interventions with pupils and their parents, but persistent absence rates remain too high.
- The school has many more boys than girls. Girls told inspectors that they are welcomed into the school and cared for well. They appreciate the positive steps taken to raise the profile of girls, such as girls-only projects and events in science and engineering.
- Pupils' spiritual and cultural understanding is limited. Year 10 pupils say that they want more opportunities to learn about healthy lifestyles, relationships and personal finance.
- A wide range of opportunities, including local visits, trips abroad and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, enrich pupils' lives. External speakers and visits by local employers ensure that pupils develop a thorough understanding of the career opportunities available to them.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Inspection evidence and the school's own records show that behaviour is not good.
- A small minority of pupils disrupt the learning of others. Almost all of the pupils who met with inspectors said that some of their lessons are spoiled by others. They understand the procedures staff use to manage behaviour but feel that not all of them do this consistently.
- The proportions of pupils temporarily and permanently excluded from school are high. School leaders feel that a small minority of pupils join with a record of poor behaviour in their previous schools. They feel that they only exclude in the most serious cases, when all other strategies have been exhausted.
- The school environment is calm and purposeful. Pupils congregate together in friendship groups in the central area. Their movement around school is prompt and

orderly. Pupils conduct themselves maturely in private study areas and the library.

- Pupils say that school is a safe, friendly place to be. They feel free from all forms of bullying. When it does occur, they say that teachers will help them to resolve it.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- Last year, greater emphasis was placed on ensuring that pupils attained basic qualifications in English and mathematics, rather than the progress made by pupils. This strategy worked; 59% of Year 11 pupils attained at least a grade C in English and mathematics. However, leaders were unable to prevent a significant proportion of pupils from underachieving in a range of other subjects. Outcomes in some science courses and a range of foundations subjects, particularly humanities and modern languages, were low.
- The school's own assessment information shows that most pupils who sat GCSE examinations last year joined the school with prior attainment that was at least similar to that found nationally. Based on their broadly average starting points, pupils made good progress in mathematics but not in English. Not all of the school's most-able pupils made the progress expected of them. Other than in mathematics and engineering, very few pupils attained A\* and A grades.
- Following what leaders describe as a 'mixed' set of results in 2016, they have acted promptly to reorganise provision and target intensive support towards those pupils at risk of underachieving. Steps have been taken to strengthen teaching. The science department has a new team of teachers. Its lead practitioner has suitable plans in place to raise achievement. A senior leader has taken responsibility for raising achievement in geography.
- Engineering and mathematics are strengths of the school. Above-average results were attained in engineering in 2016. Almost a third of pupils attained the very highest grades in mathematics, and 14 pupils achieved a pass grade in further mathematics. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about their interest in engineering and the challenge it provides for them, as well as the career opportunities open to them.
- Current assessment information suggests that pupils are making good progress. Observations of pupils at work in lessons and scrutinising their work in books did not support this view. The variable quality of teaching leads to pupils making good progress in some subjects, but not in others. Teachers do not make regular checks of pupils' work in lessons to ensure that they understand and are working hard enough.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and a small proportion of less able pupils, do not make good progress because not enough support is provided for them in lessons. Teachers work hard to provide one-to-one support, and enlist the most able pupils to help those who do not understand. However, without regular support, these pupils easily disengage from learning when work is too difficult for them.
- Last year, effective spending of the pupil premium ensured that the attainment of a small proportion of disadvantaged pupils was similar to the national average. This year, the lead teacher responsible for monitoring the progress and welfare of disadvantaged pupils has identified that not all of them are progressing well enough.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

## Requires improvement

- Leaders acknowledge that overall results in 2016 were not good enough. The guidance and advice provided for students on entry to the sixth form did not steer them towards appropriate A-level studies, alongside vocational awards. Furthermore, interventions by staff to prevent students from underachieving were targeted towards their engineering studies, rather than their A levels. Consequently, their achievement at A level was low.
- In their A-level subjects, students attained, on average, E grades. Very few of them attained A\* to B grades. In some subjects, a significant proportion of students failed to get at least an E grade. Value-added scores show that students attained more than one grade lower than expected. Last year's results in BTEC engineering were high, with more than half of students attaining distinctions.
- The small proportion of students who completed re-sits in GCSE English and mathematics achieved well and attained higher grades.
- The leader of the sixth form has put in place detailed plans to raise A-level achievement. Entry requirements have been revised. New pathways guide students towards the right blend of academic and vocational study. Procedures for monitoring teaching and students' progress have been strengthened. Further training opportunities for staff are provided. Attendance is monitored more often to reduce the high rate of persistent absence.
- This is leading to improvement. The school's assessment information suggests that these strategies are working. Current predictions show that most students are on target to attain C or D grades this year.
- Similar to key stage 4, the quality of teaching varies in the sixth form. This leads to variable progress made across and within subjects. Inspectors found that students' work is not regularly checked and some tasks lack sufficient challenge. For example, in chemistry, basic copying tasks were not challenging enough. In computer science, questioning did not involve all students, so some of them became easily distracted.
- Inspectors also found good practice. Detailed subject knowledge, effective planning and thorough questioning of students combined in mathematics and in physics to promote good progress. In mathematics, good modelling by the teacher of what students were expected to learn, and the one-to-one support provided for them, led to good progress being made.
- Weekly enrichment classes and interventions in the additional 'lesson 6' are well attended. High-quality teaching of applying mathematics in engineering projects stimulated students' interest and understanding. In physics, good teaching and thorough analysis of past exam questions boosted students' knowledge and understanding.
- Engineering has a high profile. Students enjoy the subject and talk enthusiastically and articulately about their learning. In lessons, learning together in groups for sustained periods of time without the aid of the teacher enabled them to discuss learning

together and formulate their own ideas. Students say that, 'teachers make sure you get it before they move on.'

- Almost all of the Year 12 students studying engineering continued into Year 13 to complete their courses. All of them progressed into higher education, apprenticeships or employment.
- Students are well behaved, mature and pleasant. They share good relations with others and with staff. They dress smartly for the workplace and are taught how to conduct themselves in the business world. Opportunities to engage in engineering projects help to develop their personal and social skills well. For example, groups of Year 12 students gave well-prepared presentations to employers about resolving a real-life engineering problem, explaining the design, timescales and costs involved. They did this confidently and professionally.
- Regular assemblies promote students' personal development and welfare. Topical themes are covered, such as bullying, the risks attached to social media and knife crime. Students' achievements are celebrated. Regular work experience and good-quality careers guidance inform students of the opportunities available to them in the local area.
- Students are allowed to smoke outside the school gates, which presents a risk to their safety.

## School details

Unique reference number	141086
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10023343

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

Type of school	Other secondary
School category	University technical college
Age range of pupils	14 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	292
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	144
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Ben Milner
Principal	Alex Hayes
Telephone number	01603 580280
Website	<a href="http://utcn.org.uk/">http://utcn.org.uk/</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@utcn.org.uk">office@utcn.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The university technical college opened in 2014.
- The school is smaller than average.
- The majority of pupils are White British. Very few are from minority ethnic backgrounds.

- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is below average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is broadly average.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 28 lessons. They visited an assembly, a presentation by sixth-form students and listened to a small group of pupils read aloud. They also observed pupils in enrichment and intervention classes during 'lesson 6' on the first day of the inspection.
- They held meetings with senior and middle leaders, a group of recently qualified teachers, four governors and two groups of pupils. An informal discussion took place between an inspector and a sixth-form student.
- Inspectors observed the school's work. They looked at the safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures, self-evaluation and improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings, records of pupils' behaviour and attendance, and other information provided by senior leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in lessons. They considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 24 free-text responses sent by parents and carers. They also considered 12 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff. There were no responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for pupils.

## Inspection team

John Mitcheson, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
John Lucas	Her Majesty's Inspector
Nicola Hood	Ofsted Inspector

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