

Inspection of UTC Portsmouth

London Road, Hilsea, Portsmouth, Hampshire PO2 9DU

Inspection dates: 26–27 February 2020

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

UTC Portsmouth is a friendly, welcoming place to learn. Staff, trustees and pupils all share the vision of achieving excellence in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education. However, leaders and trustees have not done enough to ensure that safeguarding is effective.

Pupils enthuse about the specialised curriculum they study, especially the projects they undertake with the school's professional partners. Pupils at key stage 4 and in the sixth form are highly focused on gaining the knowledge and skills they will need to work in STEM-related careers.

Pupils typically emulate the high standards of behaviour expected in a business setting. They behave sensibly and maturely. Pupils are respectful of each other and rarely fall out. The vast majority attend school very regularly, although a few in Year 12 do not attend frequently enough.

There is largely a very purposeful atmosphere of learning in this school. Pupils appreciate the positive, professional relationships they develop with staff. However, occasionally, pupils lose focus when the curriculum is not planned or delivered well enough to meet pupils' different needs. Sometimes, this includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils feel valued and safe in school. They know that staff will listen if they have any worries.

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

Pupils at UTC Portsmouth benefit from a good-quality education. Leaders have designed a curriculum that provides pupils with the knowledge, skills and aptitudes that local and national STEM businesses and university courses require. Pupils gain good knowledge of STEM subjects through studying a range of relevant academic, vocational and technical subjects. The sixth form is especially strong.

A compulsory 'training and enrichment' programme helps pupils to develop strong technical, social and problem-solving skills. Pupils benefit strongly from the school's strong business and university links through work on extended assignments with the school's professional partners. Recent projects include helping the Royal Navy decide which sealant to use when restoring HMS Victory, and stress-testing projects for BAE and Airbus. Pupils' horizons are further broadened through a range of trips and visits, such as skiing and sailing. High-quality, impartial careers guidance enables all pupils to move on to a higher level of qualification, employment or further training when they are ready to do so.

The positive impact that the curriculum has on pupils can be seen from the strong destinations they move on to when they leave the school. Over half of the first cohort to leave the sixth form went on to study STEM subjects at university, with the

rest taking up STEM-related apprenticeships and employment. Pupils at the end of key stage 4 achieved especially well in mathematics.

Some adaptations to the curriculum and teaching have been made in subjects where pupils did not achieve as well as they should. However, there is more to do. In key stage 4, pupils sometimes do not remember enough when the curriculum has not been adapted to meet pupils' different starting points, or when it has been rushed through without enough time to learn it. This is especially affecting some younger pupils and some pupils with SEND. Training to address this is underway and is starting to make a positive difference to how well these pupils learn.

Leaders have made sure that what pupils learn is taught in a logical order. Teachers reference what they know has been taught in other subjects. This helps pupils to make links across the whole STEM curriculum and therefore deepen their understanding. The curriculum in English is carefully designed to match pupils' needs and interests. However, pupils' literacy skills are not yet developed well enough across the whole curriculum.

Pupils know how to work safely when using specialist scientific and technical equipment in school. Pupils also learn how to keep themselves safe in their community and online. Assemblies, tutor times and a strong programme of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education support this work.

Staff care about pupils' safety and well-being. They do much to support pupils who are at risk of harm or need assistance to keep themselves safe. Pupils appreciate this. They know there is extra help available for them in school if they need it. Parents and carers who responded to the Ofsted Parent View survey were overwhelmingly positive about the welcoming and caring nature of the school.

Leaders and trustees have been successful in establishing the school as a place where pupils can learn successfully. Business partnerships work well. Staff are dedicated and enthusiastic. They feel very well supported in developing the curriculum and in managing their workloads. Leaders recognise that, as the school continues to expand, new middle leaders need training in how to adapt their leadership skills to meet the demands of managing larger teams. However, sometimes, leaders' improvement plans are not sharp enough. Most importantly, leaders and trustees have made some serious errors in their approach to safeguarding.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Trustees have not checked that leaders' safeguarding knowledge and practice are sufficiently strong. There are not enough trained safeguarding leaders in the school. Leaders' records about pupils' well-being and safety, including potentially vulnerable pupils, are muddled and sometimes incomplete. Leaders are unable to quickly collate and share key information when needed. Leaders' knowledge about when to

escalate a concern is not secure enough. They do not routinely check how safe vulnerable pupils are over time, or always effectively follow up when a concern is raised about a pupil's welfare. This potentially places pupils at risk.

Staff are well trained in safeguarding and understand the local risks that pupils face in their everyday lives. They know the signs that might indicate that a pupil is at risk and how to report these concerns. All of the appropriate recruitment checks on adults working and visiting the school are carried out.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Trustees and leaders have not ensured that safeguarding is effective. They need to urgently address the weaknesses in the leadership of safeguarding. They should: make sure that there are enough trained leaders to deal with concerns; keep records up to date that are accurate and in an orderly way; make sure that leaders consider all they know about a pupil when contemplating how serious any concerns might be; ensure that leaders fully understand local safeguarding thresholds and when to escalate concerns to other agencies; make sure that leaders monitor and review safeguarding cases over time and in a systematic way; ensure that visitors to the school know and understand their safeguarding responsibilities; make sure the checks made when recruiting new staff are understood by the people doing the checks themselves and by those who monitor the single central record.
- Typically, pupils learn well across the curriculum. However, sometimes, activities are not sufficiently well adapted and delivered to meet pupils' different starting points or needs. Occasionally, not enough curriculum time is devoted to some topics. This potentially hinders the learning of pupils with SEND and some pupils in Year 10. However, it is clear from the actions that leaders have already taken to train staff in understanding pupils' needs that they are in the process of bringing this about. For this reason, the transition arrangement has been applied.
- The curriculum outside of English does not support pupils to improve their literacy skills well enough. Leaders should develop a whole-school literacy strategy to give pupils who join the school with low levels of literacy every chance of future success.
- Some aspects of leadership need sharpening. Improvement plans do not identify precisely enough what leaders want to achieve, how they want to achieve it, and how they are going to check if they are achieving it. In addition, some new subject leaders need to be trained in how to lead larger department teams effectively as the school grows.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

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

Further information

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

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

School details

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| Unique reference number | 143430 |
| Local authority | Portsmouth |
| Inspection number | 10122191 |
| Type of school | Technical |
| School category | University technical college |
| Age range of pupils | 14 to 19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 378 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 143 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Rod Edwards |
| Principal | James Doherty |
| Website | www.utcportsmouth.org |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Information about this school

- UTC Portsmouth opened in September 2017 for pupils aged between 14 and 19 years who wish to be educated for engineering, advanced manufacturing and science-related occupations. It is a university technical college with a specialised curriculum that focuses on STEM subjects. A core part of the school's provision is delivered through their work with business partners.
- The school has a range of business partners, of which the primary academic and industry partners are: University of Portsmouth, The Royal Navy, Portsmouth City Council, Salterns Academy Trust, BAE Systems and QinetiQ.
- UTC Portsmouth Academy Trust provides governance for the school. It is a stand-alone academy trust. The board of trustees includes representative trustees of each of the primary business partners.
- The UTC is smaller than an average secondary school. It provides education for pupils in key stages 4 and 5. Pupils join the school in Year 10 or in Year 12 for the sixth form.

- The previous principal retired from the school in January 2020. The current principal was previously the vice principal of the school.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is much lower than the national average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is below the national average.
- Approximately one third of the pupils are girls, and two thirds boys. The proportion of girls who attend the school has increased since it opened.
- The school uses no alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

- We met with the principal and other senior leaders. We met with three trustees, including the chair of trustees.
- We met with a range of staff, including formally with a group of staff and individually during 'drop-in' sessions. We considered the 34 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.
- We observed pupils as they moved between lessons at breaktime and at lunchtime. We spoke to pupils informally in lessons and around the school. We also met formally with two groups of pupils. We considered the 287 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.
- We took account of the 58 responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey.
- We scrutinised a range of documents, including records relating to governance and the school's strategic planning and those relating to pupils' behaviour, attendance and safety.
- In considering the quality of education, we did deep dives in these subjects: engineering, science, mathematics, English and PSHE education. The deep dive into PSHE included considering the 'training and enrichment' aspect of the school's specialised curriculum. As part of the training and enrichment curriculum pupils undertake work-related learning projects with the school's industry partners. Deep dive activities included discussing the arrangements for the curriculum and teaching with the principal, subject leaders and teachers. We visited lessons and talked with pupils about what they had been learning. We looked at pupils' work in these subjects.

Inspection team

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