

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



1 April 2021

Sarah Valentine  
Principal  
Buckinghamshire UTC  
Oxford Road  
Aylesbury  
Buckinghamshire  
HP21 8PB

Dear Mrs Valentine

### **Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Buckinghamshire UTC**

Following my remote inspection with Shaun Jarvis, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 16 March 2021, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken to provide education to all pupils during the current circumstances.

This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 (2) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended) and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for visiting schools while routine inspections remain temporarily suspended. It was additional to the usual monitoring process for schools that are judged to require improvement.

This monitoring inspection was carried out remotely. As such, the range of evidence available to inspectors was narrower than would normally be the case during an on-site inspection. As a result, this letter provides a more limited level of assurance than our usual monitoring reports.

The inspection took place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in January 2018.

Having considered all the evidence and taking into account the impact of COVID-19 on the school, I am of the opinion that at this time:

**Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action to provide education in the current circumstances.**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should take further action to:

- develop pupils' reading skills to support pupils' learning across all subjects
- refine the curriculum to ensure suitable challenge for all pupils in English, mathematics and science GCSE courses.

### **Context**

- Since the previous monitoring inspection in July 2019, one assistant principal has left, a new chair of governors has been appointed and three new governors have joined the governing body.
- Approximately nine out of ten pupils were educated at home when the school was closed to most pupils earlier in the spring term. During this time, one third of vulnerable pupils and a small proportion of pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND) were attending on site for all or part of each week.
- The school fully opened to all pupils last week. At the time of this inspection all year groups were learning on site.

### **Main findings**

- Pupils were better prepared to learn remotely when schools partially closed after Christmas than last spring. Learning from their experiences during the first lockdown, leaders adapted their curriculum plans and altered teaching during the first half of the autumn term. Teachers focused on revisiting key concepts and vocabulary in each subject and boosting pupils' subject knowledge. At the same time, staff developed improved resources for online learning.
- This term, leaders have made sure pupils continue to study their usual subjects as well as their non-examined learning in areas such as personal, social and health education. Through their very strong partnerships with local employers, coupled with some creative thinking, leaders have ensured that they continue to enrich and extend learning in the University Technical College's (UTC) specialist building studies and computing courses. Competitions, interviews, access to motivational speakers and work experience opportunities all continued remotely while the school was closed to most pupils. In GCSE subjects, leaders sensibly reordered some topics that they considered more difficult to teach to pupils at home and now intend to teach them later in the year.
- Subject leaders' monitoring systems help identify what pupils know and can remember. Now that all pupils have returned to school, staff are prioritising pupils' well-being and using informal assessments to identify knowledge that

pupils have struggled to understand. Teachers are revisiting these areas. More formal assessments are planned for later this term.

- Over the last two years, leaders have used external advisers and staff training to bring about improvements in English, mathematics and science. However, the pace and impact of this work have been affected by recent staff changes and the pandemic. Senior leaders have prioritised actions to continue to raise standards in these subjects this year.
- Following the previous inspection, leaders introduced programmes to support pupils who struggle with their reading. New resources were purchased, and staff trained to assess and support pupils at an early stage of reading. Early signs were promising with some pupils showing an increase in their skills and engagement with reading. These programmes slowed down when pupils were learning at home. Governors, leaders and employer partners all agree with inspectors that the promotion of literacy remains an important priority for the UTC.
- Leaders are ensuring that Year 11 and Year 13 pupils keep up with their studies and are preparing them for their next stage of education. Leaders, advisers and local employers regularly support pupils with high-quality work experience, careers education and advice. Pupils particularly value how the UTC has supported them to gain apprenticeships or places at their chosen college or university. Pupils trust their teachers' judgements and feel confident about their examination grades this year.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and her team have high aspirations for all pupils with SEND. They know individual pupils well and have responded flexibly to the changing circumstances this year, offering pupils bespoke one-to-one and small group support. The SENCo provides regular training for teachers and shares useful information, which gives teachers the confidence to enhance the support they give to pupils with SEND in their lessons.
- The experienced team of governors are dedicated to the vision and aims of the UTC. They share a good understanding of the challenges leaders face, particularly those of the past year. New governors with relevant expertise have recently been recruited to help enhance pupil recruitment to the UTC. Governors regularly monitor the UTC's work so they have an accurate understanding and the ability to challenge leaders about the education the school is providing in the current circumstances.
- Senior leaders are outward looking, making good use of their excellent links with businesses and working with other local schools to access relevant staff training. The local authority knows the school well and has coordinated support for leadership and to boost standards of education. Advisers have

also supported leaders to address improvements to attendance and behaviour.

## **Evidence**

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, staff, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown. I also met with a number of representatives from local employers who work in partnership with the school to discuss their ongoing work to support the UTC's specialist curriculum.

We reviewed examples of external advisers' reports of visit and records of the governing body's visits to the school and their meetings. We also held meetings with subject leaders and looked at examples of their planning for, and reviews of, remote lessons. I met with a group of pupils and sixth formers. We also took account of the 13 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 13 responses to the online survey Parent View.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Buckinghamshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Newberry  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**