

Inspection of The Leigh UTC

Brunel Way, Dartford, Kent DA1 5TF

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 May 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at The Leigh UTC enthuse about the school's emphasis on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects. They are proud to attend a school that is realising its vision of 'developing STEM professionals for the future global market'. Pupils especially relish learning in the extremely well-equipped engineering suite. They appreciate the access they have to mentors from local businesses who share their experiences of how to successfully navigate the world of work.

Pupils throughout the school typically get on well with each other. Pupils know that staff will help them with their learning or if they fall out with others. They are confident that any poor behaviour, such as bullying or banter, does not happen often, and that when it does, 'it gets shut down pretty quickly'. Students in the sixth form value the positive, friendly and professional relationships they have with each other and with staff.

Pupils are being well prepared for their future lives in society. They learn how they can make a difference to the world by using the skills and knowledge they acquire through learning STEM subjects. However, older pupils would like to learn more about healthy relationships and how to deal with harassment in the wider world.

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

The curriculum is designed to meet the requirements of the International Baccalaureate (IB), including the Middle Years Programme (MYP) taught in Years 7, 8 and 9. Across the school, the important knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn, and the order in which they should learn them, are clearly identified. Strong assessment procedures ensure that staff know what pupils have and have not yet learned. Staff make useful adaptations to fill gaps in pupils' learning, especially those resulting from the disruption of the pandemic. Pupils appreciate routine opportunities to review their learning and embed their knowledge.

Leaders' close work with employers ensures that learning programmes in the sixth form are tightly aligned with local and regional needs. For example, in engineering, students undertake design project briefs that match industry standards and requirements. They develop technical knowledge that is directly transferable when they start work in local industries, take up apprenticeships or begin university courses. Leaders, governors and the trust are rightly proud that a high proportion of pupils leave to take up STEM careers, including double the proportion of girls than is found nationally.

Typically, staff are adept at choosing activities that help pupils learn effectively. Occasionally, where learning is not as well adapted to meet pupils' needs as it should be, pupils lose focus and become disengaged. Sometimes, methods used to adapt learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), but without an education, health and care (EHC) plan, are not targeted carefully

enough to meet pupils' specific needs. Leaders and governors' monitoring identified this. Staff are receiving expert additional training in understanding pupils' different needs. As a result, staff are getting much better at meeting the precise needs of pupils with SEND.

Pupils' wider personal development is strongly promoted throughout the school. There are numerous opportunities for pupils to participate in STEM-related competitions and clubs, such as one where they design, build and race an electric car. Before the pandemic, numerous work-experience placements supported pupils' preparations for their future. These are being reintroduced. This year, leaders have revised the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. Pupils report that this is giving them some important knowledge to help keep themselves safe, such as about the risks relating to the internet, and drugs and alcohol. However, older pupils have not had as much education about healthy relationships and harassment as they should have.

Pupils' behaviour is good. Most pupils attend school very regularly. Effective support from the school's pastoral team helps those pupils who struggle to improve their behaviour and attendance. The pastoral team acts promptly to provide bespoke support for those who need extra help to stay healthy and safe.

Leaders noted that the disruption caused by the pandemic led to a dip in some pupils' behaviour. Consequently, leaders have put in place a range of measures to bring pupils' behaviour back up to the high standards they expect. While some pupils are still adjusting to these raised expectations, the new procedures are working well. Pupils' behaviour around the school is typically calm and focused on learning. Behaviour and attitudes to learning in the sixth form are exemplary.

Leaders, governors and the trust have high expectations of pupils' learning. Their close monitoring of the school's work allows them to act swiftly to make any necessary improvements. Staff feel well supported in managing their workload. They appreciate that leaders look out for their well-being. They are enthusiastic about the additional training that is helping them to better meet the needs of pupils with SEND.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that there is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Leaders and staff are well trained. They know the local risks to pupils' safety and the signs that may suggest a pupil is at risk of harm. Staff report any concerns and the pastoral team follows up on these well, including with other agencies where necessary.

All appropriate checks are completed to ensure the suitability of adults working in the school. Safeguarding records are well kept and monitored to ensure that

information about pupils' well-being and safety contributes to the school's collective work to keep pupils safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Rightly, leaders have identified that, although provision for pupils with an EHC plan is effective, provision for other pupils with SEND is not effective enough. Staff do not have the detailed knowledge they need about each pupil's different needs. Some staff are not well enough trained in how to adapt learning to meet pupils' needs. Leaders should continue to improve provision for pupils with SEND so that their learning is maximised and they achieve well.
- The current programme of PSHE is not well enough sequenced to ensure that pupils are taught important knowledge sequentially throughout the whole time they are in school. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum for sex and relationships education is taught to pupils in an age-appropriate way so that older pupils have the knowledge they need about healthy relationships and harassment and are fully informed about risks.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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

Unique reference number	140987
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10227295
Type of school	Technical
School category	University technical college
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	735
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	84
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Frank Green
Principal	Steve Leahey
Website	http://theleighutc.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	1 and 2 February 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a university technical college (UTC). It provides technical education for pupils aged 11–19. It has specialisms in engineering, computer science and business.
- The Leigh UTC is part of Leigh Academies Trust. It is sponsored by the University of Greenwich and a range of employers, including Thames Water, Coca-Cola, Balfour Beatty, Connect Plus (M25), CSB Logistics and Kenard Engineering.
- At the time of the previous inspection, the school offered a 14–18 provision. In September 2017, it began accepting pupils from Year 7. These pupils study a broad curriculum as part of the IB MYP. From Year 10, pupils choose from a range of GCSE and BTEC qualifications, with a strong focus on STEM subjects.
- Students in the sixth form follow one of three pathways. Students following the professional and academic pathways study a mixture of qualifications including A levels, BTEC qualifications and the IB careers-related programme. Pupils following

the technical pathway study a mixture of T Levels and BTEC qualifications. T levels were not inspected as they are not in scope for section 5 inspections.

- Most pupils join the school in Year 7. However, several pupils are able to join at the start of Year 10 and Year 12.
- In the sixth form, the school day is longer than the usual school day. Students start at 8.30am and leave at 5pm. They have home study on Wednesdays. Pupils in the rest of the school follow a normal school day, with an earlier finish on Wednesday afternoons.
- At the time of the inspection, there had been a number of recent changes to leadership positions, including the appointment of a new special educational needs coordinator and a new vice-principal.
- The school currently uses two registered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the principal, senior leaders and members of staff.
- The lead inspector held meetings with governors and representatives from Leigh Academies Trust, including the chief executive officer and academies director.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, German, business and engineering. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum, visited lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also visited a sample of other lessons and tutor time, and explored the curriculum for PSHE.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors discussed safeguarding with leaders, governors, staff and pupils. They reviewed the school's policies and procedures used to keep children safe, including checking the single central record of recruitment checks.
- Inspectors met with a group of the school's local business partners and some past pupils.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to the confidential staff survey and spoke to staff about their views of the school.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents and carers, including through the responses to Ofsted Parent View and additional free-text comments, and some emails sent to Ofsted.

- Inspectors met with a range of pupils to discuss their views about the school. Inspectors also considered the response to Ofsted’s online survey for pupils.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including the school’s self-evaluation and development plans.

Inspection team

Catherine Old, lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Julia Mortimore

Ofsted Inspector

Steve Baker

Ofsted Inspector

Peter Cox

Her Majesty’s Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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