

Inspection of University Collegiate School

Deane Road, Bolton, Greater Manchester BL3 5AG

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 December 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Sixth-form provision

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, and students in the sixth form, at University Collegiate School have been let down by the low expectations of leaders and staff. They are not receiving an acceptable standard of education. The curriculum is underdeveloped. For many pupils and students, this is stifling their learning, negatively affecting their wider personal development and preventing them from realising their future aspirations. Many pupils, and students in the sixth form, underachieve considerably.

Pupils' behaviour and conduct are extremely uneven. In the main, students in the sixth form enjoy positive relationships with each other and staff. In sharp contrast, many pupils in Years 7 to 11 treat other pupils and staff with contempt and disrespect.

Pupils in Years 7 to 11 are regularly exposed to the unpleasant behaviour of some of their peers. Many pupils are used to hearing derogatory and discriminatory insults. They regularly see fights and violent outbursts. Some pupils are subjected to bullying, victimisation and other totally unacceptable experiences, such as unwanted sexual behaviour. Leaders have not established a school where pupils are safeguarded.

Many pupils have come to accept poor behaviour as the norm. The experiences of some pupils mean that they do not feel happy or safe. Many pupils do not report their experiences to staff. This is because some pupils are afraid to tell staff about the behaviours of others. A considerable number of pupils are not confident that staff will deal with their concerns, including bullying.

Pupils and students in the sixth form do not benefit from adequate opportunities to learn how to keep themselves safe or to be good citizens. They are ill-prepared for life in modern Britain.

Pupils and students in the sixth form do not get enough access to additional opportunities to nurture their talents and wider interests. Younger pupils enjoy a growing range of clubs and sporting activities. However, enrichment opportunities for older pupils and students in the sixth form are severely limited.

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

Leaders, trustees and members of the local advisory committee have overseen an inadequate standard of education for all pupils, including students in the sixth form. They have also failed to address the poor behaviour of pupils in key stages 3 and 4. Leaders, members of the local advisory committee and trustees have not demonstrated the capacity to tackle these considerable weaknesses. They have failed in their duties to keep pupils and students safe.

Members of the local advisory committee do not understand their roles and responsibilities. Current tensions between trustees and the local advisory committee

continue to exacerbate the situation. These tensions are impeding the urgent actions required to improve the quality of education for pupils and students. The only saving grace amid these considerable shortcomings is the recent appointment of new leaders who have the knowledge and understanding to identify the issues that urgently need tackling.

The curriculum offer in the school is complex. For example, pupils in Year 10 study an appropriate range of subjects which fit within the parameters of a university technical college (UTC) curriculum. Conversely, pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not study an appropriately broad range of subjects. The curriculum for these pupils does not match the ambition of the national curriculum.

Right across the school, including in the sixth form, pupils and students do not get the opportunities that they need to study subjects in sufficient depth. This is because although leaders have thought about the broad topics that pupils and students must learn, they have not identified the essential knowledge that sits underneath these topics. In addition, the sixth-form study programmes are poorly designed. As a result, pupils, and students in the sixth form, do not develop a deep and rich body of subject knowledge. Too many underachieve, especially by the end of key stage 4.

To compound the weaknesses in the curriculum even further, the subject content that teachers choose to deliver in key stages 3 and 4, and in vocational subjects in the sixth form, lacks ambition. This is because teachers do not have adequate guidance. Consequently, teachers do not provide suitable activities for pupils and students to help them gain knowledge successfully.

Leaders have not established appropriate assessment systems to check how well pupils and students learn the curriculum. Teachers are not adept at identifying gaps in pupils' and students' learning. Consequently, pupils and students throughout the school, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), have wide gaps in their knowledge and understanding. This includes students in the sixth form who sometimes have their work assessed as being correct when it is inaccurate.

Weaknesses in the design and delivery of subject curriculums, including in the sixth form, mean that pupils and students do not get sufficient opportunities to develop their skills, talents and interests. Many pupils and students do not attain the qualifications that they need to realise suitably ambitious aspirations. This is unacceptable.

The systems for identifying the needs of pupils and students with SEND are underdeveloped. Often, pupils' and students' support plans do not identify their specific needs. Many teachers do not have the information, knowledge or skills that they need to support these pupils and students effectively. They do not know how to adapt the delivery of the curriculum for pupils with SEND. As a result, many pupils with SEND receive a poor-quality education.

Leaders identify pupils who are at the earliest stages of learning to read. However, they do not identify the gaps that these pupils have in their reading knowledge. The support that these pupils receive is often not matched to their particular needs. In addition, some of the staff who support these pupils do not have the expertise that they need. Consequently, the impact of this support is poor. Many of these pupils struggle to learn new knowledge because they are unable to access the curriculum or the resources that teachers prepare.

Pupils' and students' behaviour and attitudes in lessons are usually better than the poor behaviour seen at social times or between lessons. In the main, teachers make effective use of behaviour systems to maintain orderly classrooms. That said, a small minority of pupils sometimes wilfully disrupt the learning of others. At other times of the day, many pupils engage in unruly and offensive behaviour.

Pupils and students are let down by personal development programmes that are not consistently well designed or delivered. Leaders carefully consider the content of the personal, social, health and economic education that pupils and students should explore. However, they do not ensure that pupils and students are taught about important aspects of citizenship. Personal development programmes are delivered by staff who have not been adequately trained. Pupils and students often struggle to recall or demonstrate what they have learned from these ineffective programmes.

Pupils and students receive comprehensive information about the careers and education opportunities that are on offer. Leaders ensure that pupils and students access additional opportunities to explore the range of next steps that they can take in their education, employment or training. However, when pupils and students have individual advice and guidance, the quality varies and sometimes lacks aspiration.

Leaders' support for staff is mixed. This includes early career teachers. Staff recognise the efforts of recently appointed leaders to support some aspects of their workload and well-being. However, the legacy of some working practices means that staff sometimes describe their roles as unmanageable. Furthermore, a considerable number of staff do not feel that leaders do enough to protect them from the poor behaviour of some pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Trustees, members of the local advisory committee and leaders have failed to fulfil their statutory duties to safeguard pupils in key stages 3 and 4, and students in the sixth form. The behaviour of some pupils is unacceptable. A considerable number of pupils and some staff reported to inspectors that they do not feel safe in school. These pupils and staff are not fully confident that leaders take the necessary action to safeguard and protect them from harm.

Leaders have not adequately established exactly who is responsible for specific aspects of safeguarding. The systems to report and record safeguarding concerns

are lax. Consequently, leaders do not have adequate oversight of the safeguarding issues that pupils and students face. They do not connect vital pieces of information to protect pupils from harm.

The records of important safeguarding checks, and staff training records, are not adequately maintained. Staff training about safeguarding is inadequate. Staff's knowledge of safeguarding themes is mixed and often weak. Some staff are not clear about what they should do when they have concerns.

Leaders' actions to follow up on safeguarding concerns are poor. Sometimes, leaders do not refer concerns to staff or other agencies in a timely way. Staff who need to know about the issues that pupils and students are facing do not always get the information that they need.

Leaders do not ensure that pupils and students are sufficiently well taught about how to stay safe in school or the local area. As a result, many pupils and students cannot securely recall what they have previously learned about making safe decisions.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders, members of the local advisory committee and trustees do not adequately safeguard pupils and staff. They do not have a coherent oversight of the safeguarding issues that pupils face. They do not manage safeguarding concerns consistently well. Sometimes, they do not make timely referrals to external agencies. As a result, some pupils and staff feel unsafe. Leaders and members of the local advisory committee must act immediately to build a strong culture of safeguarding where pupils and staff are protected from harm. They must discharge their statutory responsibilities to safeguard pupils.
- Members of the local advisory committee do not understand their roles and responsibilities. There are tensions between members of the local advisory committee and the board of trustees. These tensions are hindering how quickly leaders can enact their vision for improving the quality of education for pupils. Leaders must address the weaknesses in governance and ensure that all trustees and members of the local advisory committee work effectively together to understand and improve the quality of education that the school provides.
- The curriculum is underdeveloped and is currently not suitably broad and balanced, particularly in key stage 3. As a result, pupils underachieve considerably across the subjects that they study. Leaders must design a coherent curriculum that is broad, balanced and as ambitious as the national curriculum. They must ensure that the curriculum meets pupils' learning needs and enables pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, to achieve highly across the full range of subjects.
- Many leaders and teachers do not know what subject content they should deliver. Additionally, the assessment strategies that many teachers use do not enable them to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge. As a result, pupils have wide gaps in

their curriculum knowledge and they underachieve. Leaders must establish what pupils must learn and give teachers the strategies that they need to assess how well pupils are progressing through subject curriculums.

- Leaders do not accurately identify where pupils have gaps in their reading knowledge. This means that pupils do not get the support that they need to catch up with their reading. As a result, some pupils cannot access the resources that their teachers prepare for them. Leaders should ensure that they know exactly which aspects of pupils' reading knowledge are preventing them from learning effectively. They should ensure that staff have the knowledge and skills to support these pupils effectively.
- Leaders do not assess and identify the needs of pupils and students with SEND as effectively as they should. The needs of these pupils and students are often not met. Pupils and students with SEND get a poor-quality education and they underachieve considerably. Leaders must ensure that pupils and students with SEND are identified in a timely manner and that they are given the support that they need to access the curriculum. Furthermore, leaders must ensure that staff are well trained to adapt the delivery of subject curriculums once they have been established.
- The personal development programme is ineffective. It is not delivered successfully nor is it understood by most pupils. This means that many pupils do not understand how to treat each other or staff with respect. As a result, some pupils are discriminatory, and many are not prepared for life in modern Britain. Leaders must ensure that the personal development programme is fit for purpose and that it adequately prepares pupils to be citizens in modern society.
- Pupils' behaviour is often poor. There are frequent fights. Many pupils also show negative attitudes towards each other and towards some staff. Some pupils also use discriminatory language or engage in unwanted sexual behaviour towards each other. Leaders must take action to improve pupils' behaviour and eradicate any discriminatory language or unwanted sexual behaviours that make pupils feel uncomfortable and unsafe.
- The study programmes in the sixth form are often poorly designed and delivered. Added to this, students do not benefit from sufficient opportunities to develop their wider employability skills, their talents or their interests. Some aspects of the personal development programmes are underdeveloped. As a result, many students underachieve, they are ill-prepared for life in modern Britain and they are not sufficiently prepared for the next stages of their education, employment or training. Leaders must overhaul the study programmes in the sixth form so that are fit for purpose and prepare students adequately for suitably ambitious futures and careers.

Having considered the evidence, we strongly recommend that leaders and those responsible for governance do not seek to appoint early career teachers.

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.

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	141941
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	10262394
Type of school	University technology college
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	490
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	70
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Crispin Pailing
Principal	Gary Whiting
Website	www.theucs.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	13 and 14 March 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, the school has changed its name from Bolton UTC to University Collegiate School.
- University Collegiate School joined The Quest Multi-Academy Trust in August 2020.
- The school previously operated as a UTC specifically for pupils and students aged 14 to 19. Since September 2020, the school has admitted pupils aged 11 to 18.
- Leaders make use of one registered alternative provision to provide full-time education for a small number of pupils.
- 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 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a graded (section 5) inspection under the same Act.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- This was the first routine inspection the school 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 and other senior leaders. They met with trustees, members of the local advisory committee and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils and students about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' and students' work.
- Inspectors spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects, including academic and vocational subjects in the sixth form.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's records of safeguarding checks and referrals. They met with leaders who have overall responsibility for safeguarding. Inspectors spoke with staff, students and pupils about the school's work to keep pupils safe.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders responsible for SEND and reading. They also looked at information about the support for pupils who have additional needs.
- Inspectors observed pupils' and students' behaviour in class and around the school site. They also scrutinised behaviour and attendance records.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils from all year groups and considered the responses of the pupils and students who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire for pupils.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff and considered the responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff.
- There were no responses to Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

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