

# Inspection of UTC Plymouth

Park Avenue, Devonport, Plymouth PL1 4RL

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Inspection dates: 17 and 18 January 2023

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Sixth-form provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

UTC Plymouth is a vibrant and welcoming school. The school's core values, which include resilience and respect, create a strong identity. Pupils are proud to attend this school. They say it feels like a family. Many parents also praise the strong relationships between staff and pupils.

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They are committed to preparing them for their next steps in education or employment. Pupils value the school's 'think like an engineer' approach to learning.

Leaders have clear expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils respond positively and conduct themselves well. Bullying is rare. If incidents occur, pupils have confidence in staff to resolve them. Pupils say that they feel safe and have a trusted adult they can talk to. Students in the sixth form are positive role models.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of optional additional activities. These include membership of the Combined Cadet Force, becoming a pupil ambassador or signing up to the 'eco club'. However, a minority of pupils do not attend any of these extra-curricular activities.

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

Leaders ensure pupils receive a high-quality education. They adapt the curriculum they offer in response to new year groups joining the school. The breadth of subjects that pupils study at key stage 3 has increased. The range of courses in the sixth form is limited, but appropriate to current students. As a university technical college, the school has only recently extended its age range to admit pupils from Year 7. Therefore, the published outcomes are not a full reflection of the quality of education that the school provides. Some pupils with SEND complete a part of their curriculum in the school's inclusion centre. This suits their needs well, and they continue to receive teaching from subject experts while there.

In most subjects, leaders have planned carefully what pupils need to know. They have also considered the sequence in which this is best taught. However, in some subjects this is not detailed enough. Teachers' use of assessment to check what pupils know and remember over time is not precise enough. In addition, some students in the sixth form do not know the subject-specific detail they need to develop their understanding fully.

Leaders understand the importance of reading. Pupils say that they are encouraged to read outside of school. Pupils who find reading difficult follow a programme that helps them to catch up and grow in confidence. However, some initiatives to increase the frequency with which pupils read are in still in their early stages. The school's first library is about to open to pupils.

Staff create a positive environment for learning. Low-level disruption is rare. Pupils like the school's reward system. It encourages them to display desirable character traits. During social times, pupils enjoy playing chess, cards or table tennis. They move around the school calmly and purposefully. Leaders provide suitable support for pupils who find behaviour expectations more difficult to manage.

Leaders enhance pupils' personal development well. Curriculum planning is detailed, but is flexible enough to respond to local or national concerns. Pupils learn about healthy relationships, the dangers of addiction and the protected characteristics. They also learn how to look after their physical and mental health. Pupils understand inclusivity and talk confidently about beliefs and cultures different to their own. Sixth-form students particularly value the focus on how to support them to manage their finances effectively.

Many pupils benefit from experiences such as attending the 'Festival of Physics' and taking part in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Leaders create successful partnerships with local employers. These partnerships prepare pupils effectively for the expectations of the workplace. Pupils and students in the sixth form visit colleges and universities. Pupils in Year 10 and Year 12 have work experience placements.

The majority of staff say that leaders support them well. Staff appreciate the opportunities provided, such as a recent 'well-being' day. Early career teachers receive a thorough induction. They quickly feel part of the school community. Leaders provide a professional development programme for staff, but it does not include sufficient subject-specific training.

The local governing body works closely with school leaders. Its members share the school's vision and understand the priorities for continued improvement. The trust responsible for the school provides additional support and challenge to leaders and the wider staff. It enables the sharing of best practice across schools.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Keeping pupils safe is seen as the responsibility of everyone working in the school. Leaders maintain accurate records and have clear safeguarding processes. They are relentless in ensuring that pupils receive the help that they need, working with external services when required.

All staff and governors receive regular and appropriate safeguarding training. The thorough recruitment process ensures staff are suitable to work with pupils.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. For example, they know about online safety and harmful sexual behaviours. Leaders make this curriculum relevant to the local area.

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

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers' use of assessment to check pupils' understanding of the curriculum is not always precise enough. As a result, some pupils develop misconceptions or are unable to follow the curriculum successfully. Leaders should ensure that there is a consistent and effective approach to checking what pupils know and remember over time.
- Staff do not always have sufficient subject-specific knowledge. Where this is the case, they do not know enough to teach some parts of the curriculum. Leaders should ensure that staff develop the required knowledge and expertise in their curriculum areas.

### 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	146560
<b>Local authority</b>	Plymouth
<b>Inspection number</b>	10256590
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	University technical college
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	542
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	50
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Marcus Agius
<b>Headteacher</b>	Joanna Ware
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.utcplymouth.org">www.utcplymouth.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school is a university technical college which specialises in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).
- The school currently uses one unregistered alternative provider.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- UTC Plymouth converted to become an academy school in September 2018. When its predecessor school, UTC Plymouth, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be inadequate.

## Information about this inspection

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

- 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 held discussions with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, the special educational needs coordinator, curriculum leaders, the chief executive officer of the trust, the director and deputy director of education from the trust and a group of governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science and engineering. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, looked at curriculum planning, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors scrutinised the single central record of adults working in the school. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to consider how well the school identifies pupils who are at risk and engages with external services. Inspectors also spoke with a range of pupils and staff about safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents and carers, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors also considered responses to the staff survey and responses to the survey for pupils.

## Inspection team

Kelly Olive, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

John Evans

Ofsted Inspector

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