

Inspection of UTC Heathrow

Potter Street, Northwood HA6 1QG

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 February 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
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?

Pupils enjoy school, and they are glad to attend UTC Heathrow. Pupils relish learning their specialist subjects of engineering and digital. They use industry-standard equipment as part of their learning. Leaders work well with their employer partners to bring subjects to life. All the work with different employers combines to give pupils a deep understanding of the world of work and the qualities that employers look for in their employees.

Leaders are ambitious for pupils and prepare them well for life after school. They provide strong careers advice and guidance. At the end of Year 13, a high proportion move on to higher education, most continuing their studies in the school's specialist subjects. Some choose to take up high-quality apprenticeships.

Staff build positive relationships with pupils. They get to know pupils well. The comment of one pupil was echoed by many similar views, saying: 'this is a place where, if you ask for help, you will get it.'

Pupils behave well. Sixth-form students are positive role models for younger pupils. Leaders take any form of discrimination seriously. For example, they take quick action in relation to any bullying that is reported. Pupils are well looked after and kept safe.

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

Leaders have created a curriculum that builds around the school's specialist subjects yet offers pupils some flexibility. For example, students in the sixth form can choose to follow the A level or technical pathways. Across the curriculum, employer-led projects are built into different subjects effectively. Employers work with teachers to deliver subject content or come into school to take part in 'challenge' days. Others offer work experience opportunities and/or practical workshops on interview techniques and presenting to others. Leaders make sure that remote education is carefully built into the curriculum.

Leaders have faced some challenges in staff recruitment in a few subject areas. As a result, while pupils achieve strong outcomes in engineering qualifications, mathematics and some sciences, outcomes in a few subjects, although improving, are not as strong.

Some pupils start at the school with large gaps in their knowledge and skills. Leaders use a variety of methods to find out what these specific gaps are. In mathematics, teachers adapt the curriculum well to make sure pupils have the knowledge they need before more difficult content is taught. In English, leaders think carefully about the texts they use and help pupils to build their confidence with writing. Pupils are given feedback that helps them to improve and redraft their work.

Leaders identify where pupils need support with reading. They have implemented different ways to support pupils with reading, including for those who need a more tailored approach. However, pupils do not have a love of reading, and they rarely read for pleasure. Some of the support to help weak readers develop fluency is not as well developed as it could be.

Leaders in most subjects have thought carefully about, and set out clearly, what pupils should be taught and when. However, in a few subjects, leaders' thinking lacks precision. Sometimes, it is not clear what leaders want pupils to know and remember. Teachers then concentrate too much on skills or activities, and knowledge is not given enough focus. Pupils then forget some of what they have learned, and their subject knowledge does not build up as well as it should. Nevertheless, teachers assess and check pupils' understanding in lots of different ways. For example, they use assessment tasks at the end of units of work.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. Parents and carers are pleased with the help and support their children receive. Pupils with SEND access the same curriculum as their peers and achieve well. Typically, their attendance, confidence and resilience also improve.

Most staff have high expectations for behaviour. They manage behaviour well, and classrooms are calm and orderly. Sometimes, the attitudes to learning of a few pupils are not as positive as their peers. Some sixth-form students are not punctual for the start of the school day.

All pupils have a weekly 'professional personal development' (PPD) lesson. Pupils are taught in an age-appropriate way about a range of topics, such as healthy relationships and equality. The 'IDEA' group gives pupils opportunities to discuss topics such as racism and feminism. Leaders also use a range of external agencies to talk to pupils about, for example, self-defence and sexual health. Sixth-form students also benefit from visits to universities and employers. The 'combined cadet force' programme is popular, but pupils would like more clubs and activities outside of engineering and digital.

Staff are proud to work at UTC Heathrow. They feel well supported, respected and listened to by leaders. Leaders have supported staff with training in areas such as behaviour management. Leaders are now rightly prioritising helping teachers to further improve their subject-specific teaching skills.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders manage day-to-day safeguarding concerns well. They make sure that they find out about any potential concerns when pupils start at the school. They work with a range of external agencies to offer support to pupils, including in relation to their attendance.

Staff know the risks that pupils may face in, for example, their commute to school. The PPD programme also includes a focus on learning to stay safe. Leaders ensure that pupils are taught about topics such as knife crime. Trustees and governors monitor safeguarding by, for example, visiting the school and speaking to staff and pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils do not enjoy reading and rarely read for pleasure. Some of the support for weaker readers is at an early stage of development. Overall, pupils are not benefiting fully from opportunities to improve their fluency and widen their vocabulary. Leaders should strengthen their support for weaker readers. They should also increase the range of fiction and non-fiction books and materials, doing all they can to develop pupils' love of reading.
- In a few subjects, the precise component knowledge that leaders want pupils to know and remember is not clearly set out. As a result, sometimes, teaching can focus on skills and activities rather than on subject knowledge. Leaders should review their curriculum thinking in these subjects, ensuring that the precise component knowledge that pupils need to learn is clearly identified and explicitly taught.

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	146375
Local authority	Hillingdon
Inspection number	10255277
Type of school	Secondary 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	218
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	147
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Cheri Ashby
Principal	Wayne Edwards (Executive)
Website	www.heathrow-utc.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school's specialist subjects are engineering and digital. It works with a range of employer partners in the delivery of the school's curriculum.
- The school is part of the Activate Learning Education Trust (ALET).
- Pupils, in the main, join the school at the start of Year 10 or Year 12. Some pupils join the school at different points of the academic year. Some start after having been out of mainstream education for a significant period of time.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, 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 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. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the executive principal, chief executive officer and a range of other senior leaders. The lead inspector also held meetings with representatives from the board of trustees and the local governing body. An inspector also met with a range of employer partners who are working with the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, engineering and digital. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons and spoke to teachers and pupils about their learning. Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work and listened to some pupils reading.
- Inspectors spoke to leaders and reviewed curriculum documentation about other subjects, including PPD and physical education. They visited other lessons in a range of subjects, including in the sixth form.
- Inspectors met with leaders with responsibility for safeguarding and behaviour. They reviewed a range of documentation, including pre-employment checks on staff, case studies, suspensions and attendance information. Inspectors also considered the views of parents, staff and pupils. The lead inspector also held a telephone meeting with a representative from the alternative provision being used by the school.
- Inspectors considered replies to Ofsted's questionnaire for parents, Parent View, and the online surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Sam Hainey, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Mike Finn

His Majesty's Inspector

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