

Inspection of Silverstone UTC

Silverstone Circuit, Towcester, Northamptonshire NN12 8TL

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 November 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Good

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

The principal of this school is John McAfee. This school is part of The Silverstone Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Karen Campbell.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are keen to attend school. Most are positive about their school experience. Many enjoy the school facilities and experiences linked to the Silverstone circuit. They hope that the school will prepare them well for their chosen career and get them 'work ready'. However, some pupils and parents/carers are disappointed that the quality of education has not lived up to their expectations.

There are good relationships between staff and pupils. As a result, most pupils behave and get on well with each other. They work hard and want to achieve. Most pupils learn to work independently and are resilient to setbacks. They get better at thinking creatively and solving problems. Pupils work safely and follow instructions closely, helping to make the school a safe environment.

Suitable experiences of the world of work help pupils appreciate how their studies are relevant to their future career aspirations. Some students in the sixth form benefit from extended placements with the school's business partners, where they work to industry standards. Pupils receive high-quality advice about careers. Many are very successful at securing appropriate placements when they leave school. However, some pupils do not achieve as well as they could in all subjects, particularly at key stage 4.

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

There have been some significant changes to the school's curriculum recently. In some subjects, the curriculum is well designed and effective, particularly in the sixth form. In these subjects, it is clear what pupils need to learn and when. However, this is not the case for all subjects, including in some of the courses in engineering. When this is the case, teachers do not know exactly what knowledge and skills pupils need to learn, or by when. This limits pupils' ability to be successful.

Pupils benefit from teachers' strong subject knowledge. Teachers usually present new information clearly. Pupils use high-quality resources and equipment to aid their learning. Some teachers use skilful questions to check what pupils can remember. However, teachers do not always use information about what pupils can remember to adapt what they will teach next. Some teachers introduce new learning before pupils have secured their knowledge of the current topic. This leaves pupils with gaps in their knowledge.

In some subjects, pupils cannot recall knowledge in specific detail. They do not understand key concepts well. Some pupils say that they are not on track to achieve well enough in science and mathematics due to the way the subjects were taught previously.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) study subjects that align to their strengths. However, the support provided for these pupils varies. While some of these pupils get the help they need, others struggle. Teachers do not have

sufficient information to know how to meet the needs of some pupils with SEND effectively. Recent training to help staff support all these pupils in lessons is yet to have an impact.

The school has not done enough to promote a love of reading. Pupils who are reluctant readers do not receive prompt enough support to help them read confidently. This affects their ability to access some aspects of the curriculum.

The personal development curriculum is in the early stages of development. Pupils learn about healthy relationships and British values during their study of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. However, they are not always able to recall this learning. Most pupils do not know enough about different faiths and cultures, or how to stay physically healthy. There are few opportunities for pupils to develop talents and interests.

Pupils appreciate the range of activities that prepare them for their next steps. For example, they receive many visits from external speakers to talk about careers.

Students in the sixth form are enthusiastic and committed to their learning. They produce high-quality work. They benefit from a range of opportunities that enable them to become confident, articulate and ambitious. For example, they visit car manufacturers as part of their engineering studies. Students enjoy showcasing their final projects to leading industry experts.

Those with responsibility for governance have ensured that there is a clear vision for the school to become a leader in the specialist curriculums it offers.

The recent changes to improve the school are moving it in the right direction. This includes in relation to how well pupils learn in their different subjects, which is beginning to improve when compared with previous, published outcomes. Staff appreciate these changes and are proud to work at the school. They say that leaders are mindful of their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, what pupils should learn and when is not identified precisely enough. As a result, teachers do not always know exactly what they should teach pupils. This limits how well some pupils can remember what they have learned and make links to what comes next. The school should ensure that there is precise clarification of what pupils should learn and be able to do in each subject so that pupils are supported to build their knowledge over time.

- Some teachers do not use assessment effectively to identify misconceptions or gaps in pupils' knowledge. This risks pupils being moved on to new learning before they are ready. The school should ensure that teachers have the necessary knowledge and skills to use assessment effectively so that they fill any gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- The school does not have a clear strategy in place to promote pupils' love of reading. Pupils who are reluctant readers are not assessed or helped quickly enough. This impacts on their ability to access other aspects of the curriculum. The school should ensure that all pupils who require it receive timely and effective support to become confident and fluent readers.
- Some pupils with SEND are not supported well in lessons. Teachers do not have sufficient information to provide some of these pupils with effective support. As a result, these pupils' needs are not always well met. The school should ensure that teachers have the necessary information, knowledge and skills so that these pupils get the help they need to be successful.
- The personal development programme is not structured well enough. Some significant aspects of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural curriculum are not thought through or delivered carefully enough. Pupils' understanding of different cultures and beliefs and of what it means to be British is too limited. The school should ensure that there is a well-devised programme for personal development that prepares pupil well for life in modern Britain.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	139690
Local authority	West Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10288345
Type of school	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	460
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	218
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Karen Campbell
Principal	John McAfee
Website	http://www.utc-silverstone.co.uk/
Dates of previous inspection	15 and 16 October 2019 under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The Silverstone Academy Trust operates Silverstone UTC as a single academy trust.
- As a university technical college, the school has two key specialisms: business studies and technical events management, and high-performance engineering.
- There have been significant changes to the senior leadership of the school since the last inspection.
- The school does not use any 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 and engagement 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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held various meetings with the principal, the deputy principals, the assistant principal and special educational needs coordinator. The lead inspector also met with the chair of trustees, other trustees, and a parent governor.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in science, mathematics, English and engineering. Inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also considered the curriculum for geography and personal development, which includes PSHE education and careers education.
- When considering the support for pupils with SEND, inspectors looked at individual pupil's education, health and care plans and associated pupil passports.
- Inspectors considered a wide variety of school documents, including the academy improvement plan.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors took note of the responses to Ofsted Parent View and considered the results of the staff and pupil surveys. Inspectors met with pupils to gather their views.

Inspection team

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His Majesty's Inspector

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