

# Inspection of UTC South Durham

Long Tens Way, Aycliffe Business Park, Newton Aycliffe, County Durham DL5 6AP

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Inspection dates: 5 and 6 March 2024

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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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	Good

The principal of this school is Tom Dower. This school is the sole provider in The Durham UTC Limited. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Tom Dower, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by David Land.

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

The main purpose of UTC South Durham is to ensure that pupils are career and life ready. This determines all aspects of their experience at the UTC. From their regular engagement with local employers, including work placements, pupils of all ages are ready for the world of work. Students, in key stage 5 particularly, are confident and articulate. They introduce themselves assuredly to visitors and shake hands.

The UTC has a professional and productive atmosphere. Pupils and staff interact respectfully, on first name terms. Pupils value being treated as adults and rise to this responsibility. From the moment of their arrival, pupils are prepared for their next steps. Consequently, they progress to strong destinations. The number of pupils moving onto high-level apprenticeships is notable. Local companies appreciate the employability of pupils who have attended the UTC.

Pupils thrive at this school, including those who have disengaged with education elsewhere. Parents and carers appreciate the transformative experience the UTC has been for their children. This is evident in the regular attendance and positive behaviour of pupils. Many pupils have had difficult experiences in education, including extended periods of absence, prior to joining the UTC. These pupils enter with low academic starting points. Most make effective progress. Leaders are focused on ensuring the academic experiences of pupils match the quality of the UTC's technical provision.

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

Many pupils choose to attend the UTC to study engineering. They benefit from the high-quality resources and environment it provides. Pupils also study a range of academic and technical qualifications, with a largely science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) focus. The school has considered what it wants pupils to learn and organised the content of the curriculum logically. This ensures that pupils build on what they already know. The school uses a range of systems to assess pupils' starting points carefully on entry to Year 10. Any pupils who struggle with reading get extra support to make sure this is not a barrier for them.

The curriculum is delivered well in lessons generally. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and give clear explanations. The ways in which teachers check on pupils' progress are less well embedded. For example, only some teachers use questioning effectively to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge. In some subjects, assessment outcomes are used well to identify and plug gaps in pupils' learning.

Teachers are ambitious for pupils and want them to succeed. Pupils enjoy applying what they have learned in subject lessons and industry-based projects. Teachers are clear about what they want pupils to learn. Pupils find this helpful. However, sometimes teaching is not adapted enough to enable pupils to make enough progress from their starting points. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Pupils behave well. They treat each other and staff with respect. They are treated as young professionals and live up to these expectations. In lessons, pupils are engaged and ready to learn. Staff address any behaviour that falls below expectations immediately. Bullying is not an issue at the UTC. On the rare occasions it does occur, staff deal with it well. Pupils value the student support centre. There are always adults for pupils to turn to for help and support. Pupils are listened to and valued.

As part of the underpinning purpose of the UTC, pupils, including those in key stage 5, are well prepared for life after education. This preparation is not only through employability skills, but also through important messages about diversity, tolerance and respect. Pupils learn about these topics in 'crew' but also hear from speakers about how these issues are important in workplaces. They learn about harassment and discrimination and the implications of these in a business. Pupils frequently go out on trips to enhance their educational experience. Key stage 5 students recently had opportunities to visit South Africa and attend a conference in Paris.

Staff are proud to work at the UTC. They are committed to its vision and purpose. This commitment is also evident from trustees, employer partners and alumni. Staff are well supported by leadership. Leaders recognise the areas of strength and aspects for development across school. Leaders have systems in place to check the quality of the provision. In some instances, these systems are not focused enough to give leaders the information they need to enact rapid improvement.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- Some staff do not use the UTC's assessment systems effectively. This means gaps in pupils' learning are sometimes missed and future teaching is not adapted to fill these gaps. The school should ensure that strong systems are in place to ensure assessment is used most effectively to inform teaching and support pupils' progress through the curriculum.
- In some instances, staff do not adapt their teaching sufficiently so that all pupils make progress from their starting points. This means that pupils, including pupils with SEND, do not make as much progress as they could. The school should ensure that teaching is adapted so that all pupils make strong progress through the curriculum.
- The school's quality assurance systems are not precise or rigorous enough consistently. This means that the school's plans to secure improvement are not sufficiently focused. The school should ensure that there is clarity in systems and sufficient rigour in the evaluation of these.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	142894
<b>Local authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	10320272
<b>Type of school</b>	Other secondary
<b>School category</b>	University technical college
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	14 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>	417
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	170
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	David Land
<b>Principal</b>	Tom Dower
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.utcsouthdurham.org">www.utcsouthdurham.org</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	9 and 10 January 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- UTC South Durham specialises in engineering and advanced manufacturing. The UTC curriculum focuses mainly on STEM subjects. All of the school's technical, academic and practical learning is designed to be applied in the workplace.
- The UTC works closely with the University of Sunderland, Hitachi Rail Europe and Gestamp Tallent, who collaborated to establish the school. The UTC is located on the Aycliffe Business Park in Durham.
- The UTC uses no alternative provision.
- The UTC 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 met with the principal, deputy principal and vice principals. They also met with trustees, including the chair of trustees. An inspector also met with a group of employer partners and alumni.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: engineering, English, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also considered the curriculum in some other subjects.
- An inspector met with the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator and looked at documentation relating to support for pupils with SEND. Inspectors considered the provision for pupils with SEND in lessons.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 also met with leaders responsible for behaviour, attendance, reading, careers and personal development.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the staff and pupil questionnaires. They also considered the views of parents through Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View.

## Inspection team

Katie Spurr, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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