

Inspection of Buckinghamshire UTC

Oxford Road, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP21 8PB

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 March 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Buckinghamshire UTC is a supportive and inclusive community. Pupils enjoy learning in this caring environment. They particularly appreciate studying either computing or building studies, which are the college's two current specialisms. Pupils work safely on practical activities. They follow instructions with thought and care. Pupils' learning is enriched through the high-quality facilities available and the close links the college has with the network of employers. However, too many pupils do not attend college regularly enough.

Most pupils get on well with each other and with staff. Pupils value being treated like adults. At break and lunchtimes, the college is a calm and orderly place. Pupils enjoy socialising with each other. They feel safe. Should any bullying or harassment occur, pupils trust that staff will listen and deal with it quickly.

Leaders have high aspirations for staff and pupils. They are determined to continue to improve the quality of education to help all pupils to truly flourish and succeed.

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

Trust leaders, the new principal and his team are ambitious for all pupils to fulfil their potential. Leaders are focusing on addressing the most important things first. They are considerate of staff workload and well-being. Senior leaders are starting to make the necessary improvements required to many aspects of the college. They know there is still much more work to do to improve the quality of education. The recently established interim executive board (IEB) is also committed to making sure that the college goes from strength to strength. They offer effective challenge to leaders for the impact of their actions.

Pupils do not learn well as well as they should in most subjects. The important knowledge and skills pupils need to learn, and the order in which they should learn them, are not identified precisely. Across subjects, leaders have begun to make the necessary changes to strengthen the quality of the curriculum but these are relatively recent.

The needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified appropriately. Leaders gather detailed information about pupils with SEND as they join the college. They use this information to build helpful 'learning profiles'. Most teachers use these profiles well to adapt the curriculum for pupils with SEND. However, these pupils are not achieving as well as they should because of weaknesses in the curriculum.

English is a strength of the college. It is taught well. Teachers engage and challenge pupils to learn and remember more. They are adept at judging how well pupils have understood key ideas before introducing new ones. However, this is not the case in other subjects. Teachers do not check carefully enough how well pupils

remember what they have learned. This means that most pupils, including those with SEND, struggle to make links in their learning.

Many pupils are not in the habit of reading for pleasure or interest. They do not take advantage of the well-stocked library. Most staff do not do enough to encourage pupils to appreciate the value of reading to expand their learning and vocabulary. Some pupils arrive at the school with weak literacy skills. Weaker readers' needs are identified accurately. Well trained staff use their expertise and appropriate resources to provide effective support. This is having a positive impact on these pupils' reading.

Pupils' behaviour is improving but is not yet good. Not all pupils have consistently positive attitudes to their learning. Recently, leaders' have raised the expectations for pupils' behaviour. There is now a coherent approach to promoting good behaviour that all staff know and apply. Most pupils are rising to these increased expectations. Senior leaders recognise that there is still more work to do.

Pupils' attendance is not high enough. This is having a negative impact on how well pupils who do not attend regularly learn. Recently, senior leaders have introduced sharply-focused strategies to address this. While there have been some improvements in individual pupils' attendance, these new strategies have not had the necessary impact yet.

Leaders do not have a consistent approach to meeting pupils' broader development needs. Pupils do not have a developed understanding of fundamental British values. Also, there are very few additional activities available for pupils to take part in to develop their interests and talents. Leaders provide a range of opportunities to bring pupils' learning to life. Most of these relate to the specialist subjects studied. The recent trip to Thailand was clearly a cultural highlight for those pupils who went. Pupils also benefit from trips closer to home; for instance, visits to Blenheim Palace and the Excel Centre. Leaders provide a range of well-considered career advice and guidance that is linked closely to the college's specialisms. This means that pupils are well informed about the next stage of their education. Pupils go on to their choice of either apprenticeships, work or choice of further education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a culture where the well-being and safety of pupils is given the highest priority. All appropriate checks are completed to ensure the suitability of staff. Staff are well trained. They know the signs that may suggest a pupil is at risk from harm, and they know what to do if they are worried. Leaders follow up any concerns swiftly. They work in partnership with other agencies and make timely and appropriate referrals. Pupils and sixth-form students can confidently explain what they need to do to keep themselves safe, including when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Across most subjects, the curriculum is not coherent and well sequenced. Leaders have not set out with enough clarity what they expect pupils to know and remember as they progress through the curriculum. As a result, pupils do not build up detailed knowledge of the curriculum. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum in all subjects is precisely planned and sequenced to enable pupils to deepen their knowledge and develop their skills over time.
- In most subjects, teachers do not check how well pupils understand what they have learned before introducing new content. When this happens, pupils, including those with SEND, struggle to make links in their learning. Leaders need to ensure that all teachers consistently assess pupils' prior knowledge accurately in order to make good decisions about what to teach next. This will ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they should in the curriculum.
- Pupils do not read widely or often. This limits the opportunities for pupils to expand their learning. Leaders should ensure that reading is at the heart of the school's curriculum. They should encourage pupils to develop a habit of reading regularly for pleasure or interest.
- Pupils' attendance is not high enough. This means that some pupils regularly miss out on essential learning. Leaders should continue with the strategies they have begun to introduce and ensure that these are implemented consistently to improve attendance across both key stage 4 and 5.
- Leaders do not have a consistent approach to meeting pupils' broader development needs. The school's work to enhance pupils' understanding of fundamental British values and promote their interests is not of a high enough quality. Leaders should ensure that the programme to promote pupils' personal development is fully effective.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	139434
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10200870
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	98
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	28
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ian Domville
Principal	Nick Lamb
Website	www.buckinghamshireutc.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	23 and 24 January 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a University Technical College (UTC). It provides technical education for pupils aged 14-19. There are currently two technical pathways available to pupils: computing and building services. A third technical pathway in health will be offered from September 2022.
- The school joined the Merchant Taylors' Oxfordshire Academy Trust in November 2021. A new principal was appointed at the same time. The trust also appointed the IEB in November 2021.
- The school currently uses one alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the principal, senior leaders and members of staff.
- Inspectors held discussions with the chief executive officer and chair of the board of trustees from the multi-academy trust. They also met with four members of the IEB, including the chair of the IEB.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, computing, and building studies. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors checked the single central record of recruitment checks and talked to leaders responsible for safeguarding. Inspectors also talked to a range of staff and pupils informally.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the confidential staff survey and spoke to a range of staff about their views of the school.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's Parent View, including additional free-text responses.
- Inspectors met with a range of pupils to discuss their views about the school. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's online pupils' survey.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation including the school development plan.

Inspection team

Louise Walker, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Clifford Shaw

Ofsted Inspector

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