

Inspection of UTC Swindon

Bristol Street, Swindon, Wiltshire SN1 5ET

Inspection dates: 8 to 9 May 2024

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

The executive principal of this school is Samantha Knowlton. This school is part of Activate Learning Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Joanne Harper, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Nicholas Evans.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils apply to the school to specialise in studying engineering and/or digital technologies. High-quality resources and strong relationships with industry support them in their learning. Pupils enjoy learning the specialist subjects. Some students joining the sixth form complete their specialist studies with a core offer of A levels.

Most pupils have respectful relationships with staff. When this happens, attitudes to learning are positive. However, some pupils in key stage 4 do not behave well. The school has re-set the expectations for behaviour. It has put clear systems in place to address unacceptable behaviour. This has brought about a reduction in some behaviours and so fewer pupils attend the reflection room. However, the systems are not applied consistently across the school and so some poor behaviour still goes unchallenged.

The school provides a strong and well-developed career education provision for all pupils. Pupils relish the many opportunities to engage with employers, visit industry and learn about apprenticeships in local and national companies. Sixth-form students move to a range of destinations, such as university or apprenticeships, at the end of their studies. They follow routes that put them on-track towards the careers they aspire to, such as engineering.

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

The school experienced some recent changes to leadership. This created a period of instability. The trust has taken prompt action to improve this. Staff are positive about these changes. For example, new leaders have put in place systems for assessing pupils. As a result, the school has a knowledge of pupils' starting points and progress through the curriculum.

The school has planned the curriculum to identify what it wants pupils to learn and when. In English, for example, the school has considered what knowledge and vocabulary pupils will need for the next stage of their learning. In science, the school is starting to deepen planning and develop links across mathematics and engineering.

The school has established points in the curriculum for formal assessment. This helps teachers to identify what pupils know. The trust has introduced a whole school approach to teaching the curriculum to check how well pupils understand their learning in lessons. However, this is not well implemented. As a result, some staff do not consistently identify the gaps pupils have in their learning.

The disrupted implementation of a few key subjects prevents pupils from progressing well through the curriculum. Many staff changes mean that some pupils do not have an equitable experience of the curriculum. As a result, pupils do not achieve as well as they could. In the sixth form, students are less affected by this.

The curriculum is well planned and implemented. As a result, sixth-form students are ready for their next steps.

Too many pupils do not attend school well. There is a culture of non-attendance that is taking time to reduce. The school track this and follow up. There is some improvement as a result. For some pupils, their experience of the curriculum impacts their attendance.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported. As they join, the school ensures their needs are well understood. Teachers have bespoke training to support them in adapting the learning for pupils. However, when the curriculum is not well implemented, pupils with SEND experience the same challenges as their peers.

The school has established a whole-school approach to reading for pleasure. Pupils in key stage 4 read frequently. The school checks how well pupils can read when they join the school. For pupils who need support to improve their reading, there are interventions to help them. However, the school does not diagnose the reasons why a pupil may not read well. Therefore, these interventions are not planned with precision.

The school has successfully raised expectations for the standards of pupils' writing. As a result, in English, pupils take time to develop and improve their writing well. The school plan to embed this work across all subject areas.

Through global and cultural learning (GCL), pupils learn a well-considered personal, social, health education (PSHE) curriculum. The school ensures pupils understand the local context well. They learn about how to stay safe online and in the community. Pupils articulate their knowledge of these issues well as a result. Pupils feel safe and confident to report their concerns.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Too many pupils do not attend school regularly. This means these pupils do not learn the curriculum and achieve well. While the school is taking action to address this, some pupils continue to miss too much of their education. The school and the trust should ensure they understand why pupils do not attend and remove barriers to improve attendance.
- Some pupils do not behave well. This is frustrating for other pupils. It impacts on their learning and their experience of school. The school has recently made changes to how behaviour is managed. This has started to have some impact.

However, the school and the trust need to ensure behaviour systems are consistently implemented so that pupils can learn effectively.

- The school has introduced a pedagogical approach to help pupils know and remember their learning. However, some staff do not routinely check how well pupils have understood. As a result, some pupils do not have a secure understanding of their work. The school and the trust should ensure the pedagogy to check for understanding is used precisely and consistently, so staff can adapt and amend teaching accordingly.

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	145155
Local authority	Swindon
Inspection number	10298058
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	189
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	55
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Nick Evans
CEO	Joanne Harper
Principal	Samantha Knowlton
Website	www.utcswindon.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	3 and 4 March 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- UTC Swindon is a university technical college specialising in engineering and digital technologies.
- The executive principal oversees two UTCs in the trust. They took their role in September 2022.
- Following the departure of the previous head of school in December 2023, the head of school was appointed to the role in April 2024.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provider.

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 the evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science and engineering. 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 held discussions with the executive principal, the head of school, members of the senior leadership team, the special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders and teachers.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from the trust, including the CEO, the chair of the trust, trustees and representatives of the local governing committee.
- Inspectors met with the careers lead and employers engaged with the UTC.
- Pupils and students in the sixth form met with inspectors to talk about their experiences of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils during break times.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation, including the school improvement plan, self-evaluation documents and records of behaviour and attendance.
- 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 considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors also viewed the responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Rachel Hesketh, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Steve Battersby	His Majesty's Inspector
Kelly Olive	His Majesty's Inspector

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