

# UTC South Durham

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

## Inspection dates

9–10 January 2019

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
16 to 19 study programmes	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The trustees, the principal and the senior leadership team have successfully established the university technical college (UTC) as a new 14 to 19 provider in the region.
- Leaders' ambitious vision is being realised. Highly effective leadership and management are quickly improving the quality of education and raising pupils' aspirations.
- Outcomes in 2018 were mixed, but rapid improvements in teaching have accelerated the pace of learning in most subjects.
- Last year, almost all pupils in key stage 4 and students in the sixth form progressed on to suitable destinations in education, employment or training. Uptake of apprenticeships was particularly strong.
- The curriculum is effectively meeting pupils' needs. The emphasis on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) appeals to the interests and aptitudes of most pupils.
- Well-developed and meaningful partnerships with employers mean that there are rich opportunities for pupils to learn about the world of work and to develop work-based skills and competencies.
- The quality of teaching is good in most subjects, including English and mathematics. Teaching has improved rapidly because leaders have set challenging standards and held teachers to account. However, there is still some variability in the quality of teaching.
- Behaviour in the school is good. Pupils are typically polite and friendly towards one another. Pupils who joined the school having exhibited challenging behaviour in a previous school improve their attitude and conduct.
- Attendance has improved year on year from a low position in the school's first year. However, attendance remains below the national average. Too many disadvantaged pupils miss school regularly.
- The quality of post-16 study programmes is good. The post-16 curriculum has broadened this year to include courses that are of interest to students and are closely linked to the local job market. Occasionally, teachers do not do enough to develop work-related skills learned by students when on work experience.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning so that outcomes across all subjects are good or outstanding by ensuring that:
  - teachers have frequent opportunities to share good practice
  - all teachers address pupils' misconceptions before moving on to the next topic
  - all teachers adapt the work they provide to challenge the most able pupils effectively
  - teachers provide extra help for disadvantaged pupils who are making slower progress in their subjects.
- Continue to improve the overall level of attendance and reduce the proportion of pupils – especially disadvantaged pupils – who are persistently absent.
- Ensure that there are more well-planned opportunities for students on 16 to 19 study programmes to practise and develop work-related skills they have learned on work experience.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Together, the trustees, the principal and the senior leadership team have quickly established the UTC South Durham as a new 14 to 19 education provider in the region. The school is growing rapidly and now attracts pupils from seven different local authority areas. Leaders have swiftly identified the different educational needs of pupils who choose the school and have adapted the curriculum well to meet their needs. As a result, most pupils currently in the school are making strong progress and becoming more aspirational in their outlook.
- The school has benefited from stable leadership at a senior level since opening in September 2016. Leaders have good systems in place to assess pupils' level of knowledge and understanding when they arrive. Furthermore, systems to assess pupils' progress have proved to be accurate. Leaders carefully review the assessment information they collect across the year to ensure that pupils follow appropriate courses and to ensure that pupils making slower progress receive extra help.
- Leaders have responded quickly to address the variability in the school's first set of external examinations in 2018. Weaker examination performances in subjects such as GCSE engineering and A-level mathematics have quickly been addressed so that pupils now make strong progress in these areas. Other subject areas that performed better are improving their performance in response to the regular training and feedback teachers receive. Most pupils – including disadvantaged pupils – currently in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form are making good progress.
- The pupil premium is used effectively. Leaders have looked carefully at the barriers that prevented disadvantaged pupils from attaining as well as other pupils nationally last year. Leaders have introduced extra help for disadvantaged pupils with reading and spelling, and redesigned the mathematics curriculum to address the gaps in their knowledge. Current tracking and the work in books show that disadvantaged pupils are now keeping pace with others in the school and are on track to attain more highly than last year.
- Leaders make thorough checks on the quality of teaching and learning and manage the performance of teachers effectively. In the school's first and second years, leaders acknowledge that the quality of teaching in several subjects required improvement. This was – in part – due to difficulties in recruiting teachers in subjects such as engineering. Since then, there has been considerable turnover of staff, with around 30% of teachers new to the school at the start of this academic year. Thorough induction arrangements and increasingly effective training and professional development opportunities have helped most teachers to establish themselves effectively. Leaders have made effective use of the support provided by the Prince Bishops Teaching School Alliance to improve the overall quality of teaching. Leaders are actively addressing the few remaining pockets of less effective practice and have recently begun to arrange more time for teachers to share practice and learn from one another.
- The curriculum aligns closely with that of other UTCs nationally. There is a strong emphasis on a technical and work-related curriculum that supports routes into

employment, particularly in STEM subjects. Inspectors found a growing proportion of pupils in each cohort actively choose the UTC because they have an interest in the specialist curriculum offered. The range of subjects and the nature of training suit their aptitudes very well. Many other pupils choose the school because they are looking for a new start in their secondary education. Leaders have recognised this and introduced suitable courses or adapted the work provided for pupils who join the school with gaps in their knowledge.

- Support for the above-average proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is well organised. These pupils told inspectors that they are very well supported. They also agreed that other pupils are very accepting of them and that staff are attentive to their needs. The additional SEND funding the school receives is used effectively.
- The curriculum also supports pupils' personal development well. Mentor time each morning, assemblies and themed days spread across the year focus on aspects of personal development and contribute to pupils' understanding of life in modern Britain. Work-related information and careers information feature strongly. For many pupils, this refocuses and inspires them, giving them a renewed sense of direction.
- Almost all the parents and carers who made their views known to inspectors are very pleased with the school. Almost all would recommend the school, with many stating the school had successfully reignited their child's interest in learning. One parent, reflecting the views of many others, said:

'My son started his year 10 study at the UTC in September 2018 and is having an extremely positive experience. He is flourishing, learning new skills and feels like he has a future now. This is all because the staff at UTC treat pupils as individuals and adults, which prepares them well for the real world.'

## **Governance of the school**

- The board of trustees has shown considerable vision, resilience and determination to establish the UTC South Durham. Their ongoing commitment throughout the planning and establishment phases has been impressive. They continue to be very actively involved and knowledgeable about the school's performance.
- The trustees bring considerable experience from industry and the academic world. They use this experience to check the school's progress against a broad range of indicators. They make effective use of published performance information and the in-year tracking data the school collects to hold leaders to account. Their experience also enables them to ensure that partnerships with the region's employers are strong and utilised well to compliment the quality of education provided.
- The trustees fulfil their statutory responsibilities effectively. For example, they systematically review the school's safeguarding systems to ensure that pupils are safe. All trustees are trained in safeguarding, including the 'Prevent' duty. They make good use of evaluative reports from the department for education adviser linked to the school. As a result, they know where to support leaders and where they need to challenge.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders keep safeguarding arrangements under careful review to ensure that their procedures are in line with the government's expectations. They established a culture of vigilance from the start and keep safeguarding high on the agenda.
- Vetting procedures on staff who work in or visit the school are rigorous.
- The management of pupils in workshops is very well developed and supports safe working practices. Pupils are taught to use all machinery correctly and must wear correct footwear and eye protection when in workshops.
- Pupils and parents consistently praise the quality of the school's student support team. Pupils told inspectors they trust adults if they have any concerns and that the rare incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly. Pupils conduct themselves well at social times and are respectful and tolerant of one another.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- The quality of teaching has improved rapidly because leaders have taken effective action. They have challenged weaker teaching, recruited some experienced new teachers and middle leaders, provided effective training and established an effective programme of ongoing professional development. However, teachers do not always have opportunities to learn from one another and to share the good practice in school.
- Leaders know precisely where teaching is less effective and have proven strategies in place to address these weaknesses.
- Most teachers plan and teach lessons that are lively and challenging and encourage students to discuss, analyse and reflect on their work. Consequently, most pupils are well motivated and engaged by their studies. They are well prepared and alert and demonstrate good study skills. Occasionally, some teachers do not adapt the work they provide sufficiently to challenge the most able pupils.
- Most teachers check pupils' understanding as lessons progress by asking probing questions and monitoring the work in their books. Most plan carefully and take the individual needs of disadvantaged pupils into account when designing learning activities. However, some teachers do not tailor their teaching as effectively as others.
- Teachers hold positive relationships with pupils. They operate on first-name terms, and use humour effectively to create a friendly, positive culture. Pupils report that they like being treated as adults.
- Almost all lessons are taught by specialist teachers. They use their good subject knowledge to ensure that learning is relevant. Teachers use accurate subject terminology, and lessons include regular opportunities to link learning with real workplace applications.
- Many pupils enter the school with relatively weak basic skills in English and mathematics. Although work to tackle this is led by the English and mathematics departments, other subject teachers make a meaningful contribution. Pupils' spelling,

punctuation and grammar are improving rapidly because of the concerted effort made by all the staff.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils speak highly of the school and their teachers. Pupils believe that teachers care for them and look after them well. They enjoy studying at the school and are passionate about its friendly and inclusive environment. An atmosphere of mutual respect and collaboration permeates the school.
- Pupils feel safe and have a good understanding of safeguarding. When issues arise, there is good support available from the pastoral team. Pupils feel part of a close-knit community which allows them to learn in a safe, positive and respectful environment. Pupils know who to talk to should they have any concerns and are aware of how to keep themselves safe online and from the dangers of radicalisation.
- Pupils learn about a variety of topics – including homophobia, gender equality, grooming and bullying, mental health and healthy relationships – through a well-planned tutorial programme. In the current year, pupils have worked with a national charity to successfully establish a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) group to promote inclusion and engagement for the LGBT community.
- Pupils benefit from a well-organised and extensive range of external visits to local businesses. They also learn much from the informative and insightful presentations by employers regarding the opportunities, demands and expectations of the workplace. Pupils find these experiences useful in helping them to appreciate the wide range of career options open to them in industry and to prepare more effectively for their chosen career.
- The quality of careers information, advice and guidance that pupils receive is strong. The school provides very effective impartial careers guidance for all pupils, including those in the sixth form. Pupils receive excellent support with applications and for interviews, which contributes to their success in securing apprenticeships.
- The UTC supports pupils' mental and physical health effectively. Pupils consistently praise the approachability of the pastoral staff. All pupils in key stage 4 and students in the sixth form do physical education. There are good extra-curricular sporting opportunities and many pupils choose to stay on after school to attend clubs or to complete their studies.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Lessons flow smoothly and without interruption because relationships between the staff and pupils are warm and friendly. It is school policy for pupils to routinely use teachers' first names. Pupils say that they are treated as adults and appreciate the culture and ethos the school promotes.

- Pupils behave well at social times and follow the rules set out in the code of conduct. They mix in a relaxed manner in the dining hall and tidy away properly. They ensure that the school and its grounds are kept tidy and free from any litter.
- In the school's first year of operation, the level of exclusions for poor behaviour was high. In part, this was because the school attracted some pupils who had a long history of being excluded from their previous schools and had lost interest in education. The use of exclusion reduced rapidly in the second year as the behaviour system established itself. This year, the rate of exclusion is in line with that seen nationally.
- Pupils who have experienced sanctions – such as spending time in the school's isolation room – praise the school's approach. They feel these sanctions helped them to reflect upon their conduct and improve it as a result.
- The overall level of attendance was low in the school's first year of operation. However, subsequent improvements in the curriculum, the quality of teaching and the work of the attendance team have seen attendance improve year on year. Although overall attendance remains below the national average for secondary schools, it is improving quickly. However, leaders acknowledge that too many pupils – especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds – continue to miss school too often.

### Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Published information about how well pupils achieve in secondary schools is based on their progress from the end of Year 7 to the end of Year 11. As pupils start the UTC in Year 10, using published information to evaluate their progress would be misleading, as they only attend this school for two years.
- The school uses a range of tests and assessments to establish pupils' starting points and reading ages when they enter the school. This information – together with published information of pupils' prior attainment at the end of key stage 2 – shows pupils enter the school with low starting points.
- Leaders acknowledge that, in the school's first and second years of operation, rates of progress were variable across different subjects. In 2018, the overall level of attainment seen in GCSE examinations was below that seen nationally. This year, the swift actions of senior leaders have rapidly reduced the variability in progress across subjects. As a result, current pupils are making strong progress in most subjects.
- In 2018, disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND made slower progress than other pupils nationally. Here again, careful planning and increasingly well-organised support have helped to accelerate the progress of both groups. Current assessment information and scrutiny of their work in books show that both groups of pupils are now making good progress and keeping pace with other pupils in the school.
- Many of the most able pupils are making strong progress. In some subjects, there are good opportunities for the most able pupils to produce individual and innovative work linked to their individual areas of interest. For example, some pupils have worked closely with employers to design and manufacture ambitious pieces of work in response to engineering briefs. However, not all teachers do enough to make sure that the most able pupils are fully challenged.



- In both English language and literature, pupils have many opportunities to write at length and develop the skills to analyse and interpret different texts. They respond well to helpful feedback, redrafting their work so that it improves quickly over time.
- In mathematics, the subject leader has recognised that many pupils join the school with considerable gaps in their knowledge. She has thoughtfully redesigned the Year 10 mathematics curriculum so that these gaps are being quickly addressed. Pupils told inspectors that they have grown in confidence and now feel able to make good progress in the subject.
- A feature of the school is the numerous opportunities for pupils to meet employers and to visit local industry. All pupils undertake work experience in key stage 4. These opportunities impress upon pupils the need to be punctual, to attend well and to present themselves smartly. As a result, many pupils become more aspirational and determined to move on to a suitable destination. Last year, all pupils who finished Year 11 went into education, employment or training.

### **16 to 19 study programmes**

**Good**

- Good leadership of post-16 study programmes is ensuring that students receive a good quality of education. Leaders track and review students' progress rigorously. They have taken rapid action where results in 2018 indicated improvements were needed. As a result, the quality of teaching in weaker-performing subjects – such as mathematics and physics – is now much improved.
- In 2018, pupils made good progress and attained above-average standards in vocational subjects. Outcomes in the school's specialism of engineering were strong. However, outcomes in some academic subjects were less convincing and have subsequently been the focus of leaders' work.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good. Teachers use their expertise to plan and teach lessons that are lively and challenging and encourage students to discuss, analyse and reflect on their work. Consequently, most pupils are well motivated and engaged by their studies. They are well prepared and alert and demonstrate good study skills. All sixth-form teachers are subject specialists. Many bring industry experience that enriches the curriculum, making it relevant and meaningful to students.
- Current students are making strong progress in English and mathematics. Students talk confidently when they present, discuss and debate topics in their lessons. Written work is of a good standard. Students become skilled in areas of mathematics such as statistics and equations and can apply their knowledge of mathematics effectively to practical projects.
- Pupils benefit from the extensive and high-quality links with employers. Employers contribute well through providing industrial-based challenges that seek to extend pupils' technical skills. For example, in engineering, a group of students are working collaboratively to design and manufacture a remotely controlled all-terrain patient stretcher for the local mountain search and rescue service. All students in the sixth form undertake work experience. However, teachers do not do enough to develop and extend the skills students gain through these opportunities when back in school.



- Leaders are continually reviewing the post-16 curriculum and are exploring ways to ensure that they offer a broad range of relevant subjects. For example, this year, they introduced a pre-apprenticeship training programme and a level 3 mechatronics course that is well aligned to local and subregional employment priorities. These changes have proved popular with students and are ensuring that the post-16 curriculum meets students' needs and interests particularly well.
- The wider curriculum supports students' personal development effectively. There is a well-considered programme in place centred on students' personal, social and health needs. In addition, students receive impartial careers guidance, coupled with a well-planned work-related programme. Leaders use their partnerships with local employers very successfully to provide opportunities for students to undertake work-related activities. They have successfully implemented a programme of industrial challenge projects that foster students' ingenuity and deepen their teamworking and problem-solving skills.
- All Year 12 students gain a first-aid certificate and all Year 13 students complete an industrial project challenge that leads to a gold level industrial cadet certificate. Students also get help in preparing for interviews and rehearse how to answer questions with different employers. These carefully selected activities and qualifications help students successfully get places on apprenticeships or to take the next step into higher education.
- Students benefit from a wide range of specialist learning resources that are used well to enhance their technical and vocational learning. As a result, they rapidly develop self-confidence in their vocational skills. They have access to a well-equipped specialist multi-skilled engineering workshop with industry-standard engineering software that enriches and supports their learning.
- All students who did not attain a good GCSE qualification in English or mathematics study the subject further in Year 12. Last year, the proportion of students who successfully went on to attain a good pass in Year 12 was higher than seen nationally.
- Last year, almost all students went on to suitable destinations. Over half secured places on apprenticeships and all those wanting to go to university secured places following courses in STEM subjects. In total, two thirds of students took steps into STEM-related careers when they left the school.

## School details

Unique reference number	142894
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10059031

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Technical
School category	University technical college
Age range of pupils	14 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	356
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	80
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	David Land
Principal	Tom Dower
Telephone number	01325 430 250
Website	<a href="http://www.utcsouthdurham.org">www.utcsouthdurham.org</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@utcsouthdurham.org">office@utcsouthdurham.org</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- UTCs are usually smaller than other 14 to 19 secondary schools. They focus heavily – but not exclusively – on STEM subjects. All their technical, academic and practical learning is designed to be applied in the workplace. A UTC’s specialism usually reflects the local economy. UTC South Durham specialises in engineering and advanced manufacturing.
- 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 number of pupils on roll has increased rapidly from 137 pupils in 2017 to 356 pupils currently. Most pupils are boys, with only 15% of pupils being girls.
- Most pupils are White British. A smaller-than-average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic groups and few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is broadly average.
- Four pupils attend alternative provision. Three attend the Durham Gateway Academy and one pupil attends Open Arms.
- The UTC is formally supported by the Baker Dearing Educational Trust, whose focus is on supporting new and existing UTCs.
- Since its establishment, the UTC has had stable senior leadership, with the current principal in post throughout. There has been more turnover in teachers, which is linked to problems recruiting suitable staff in some subject areas. A considerable number of new teachers joined the UTC in September 2018.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held meetings with the principal and other senior leaders, subject leaders for English, mathematics and engineering, and a group of teachers.
- Inspectors also held meetings with three trustees and spoke to an education consultant who supports the school.
- Inspectors met with three groups of pupils and spoke to others more informally during lessons and at social times.
- Inspectors visited a range of lessons across key stage 4 and in the sixth form. Most of these visits were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. During observations, inspectors sampled pupils' books and talked to pupils to evaluate their level of understanding of their current topics.
- Inspectors scrutinised a sample of pupils' books from key stage 4 covering subjects across the curriculum. Inspectors also scrutinised a range of books from students in the sixth form.
- Inspectors observed pupils at breaktime and lunchtime and observed their behaviour and conduct around the school.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, policies, assessment information and records of checks on the quality of teaching. Inspectors also looked at records of attendance and behaviour and safeguarding information.
- Inspectors took account of the 94 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. In addition, the inspectors took account of the 21 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and the 64 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

## Inspection team

Chris Smith, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Carl Sugden	Ofsted Inspector
Victor Reid	Her Majesty's Inspector

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