

The Leigh UTC

Brunel Way, Dartford, Kent DA1 5TF

Inspection dates

1–2 February 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leigh Academies Trust, governors and leaders provide strong direction and leadership. In partnership with staff and employers, they are well on the road to establishing the school as a centre of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) excellence.
- The Leigh UTC makes a real difference for its pupils and the surrounding area. Pupils become motivated to find and follow their passions. They leave well equipped to succeed in engineering and related technical and design careers and contribute to the economy.
- The principal, with his leaders and staff team, model a high-quality working environment. This rubs off on pupils, who value the supportive ethos, work-like atmosphere and 'business length' days.
- The promotion of pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. A rich range of opportunities prepares pupils very well for life in modern Britain.
- Teachers know their classes very well. Typically, they teach lessons that engage pupils' interest and help them build confidence, skills and knowledge.
- Pupils, including the disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, catch up from any previous underachievement and make strong and often rapid progress in a range of subjects and disciplines.
- Students in the sixth form typically achieve well, and in 2016 achieved at a high level in technical qualifications and core mathematics.
- Senior leaders have swiftly tackled previous weaknesses in teaching and have an accurate understanding of where this improvement needs consolidation. This is most notable in science and in pupils' development and use of scientific and technical knowledge in design and technology.
- Pupils' conduct around the school is calm and orderly. They show respect to adults and one another. Their application to learning is often exemplary.
- On occasion, where teaching does not capture pupils' interest, their engagement level is not as high and some pupils cause low-level disruption.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Building on existing strengths, ensure that pupils achieve equally highly across the subjects they study by:
 - ensuring that teaching enables pupils, and the most able in particular, to develop increasingly strong scientific understanding and apply a high degree of scientific and technical knowledge to their design and technology work
 - making sure teaching promotes a consistently excellent level of engagement, so that behaviour for learning is routinely outstanding and low-level disruption becomes extremely rare.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The vision for a UTC that provides quality pathways into engineering and technical industries has been realised. The school is well on the way to becoming a beacon of excellence.
- The trust, governors, leaders, staff and pupils share a pride in the school and have high expectations for what they can achieve. The firm belief that the school will make a difference for its pupils and the region permeates all of school life. Pupils leave well equipped to pursue successful careers and contribute to the local and wider economy.
- The principal's passion and commitment to the UTC vision is infectious. With his leadership team, he has created a model working environment for pupils and staff alike. One staff member summed up, commenting: 'I have never felt more respected and fairly treated in a workplace as I do here. There is no them and us, we are one team working together for the best for our students.' Pupils value highly the UTC ethos and the rich opportunities it provides.
- The curriculum provides a rich range of opportunities for pupils to develop the knowledge and skills needed to progress and succeed in engineering, technical and related careers. Very strong links with industry enable pupils to bring their learning to life through engaging projects set by employers. Pupils develop their understanding of the engineering, technical and related industries through studying a suite of applied, vocational and technical courses underpinned by a strong core in English and mathematics. Qualifications, such as those in computer aided design, and leadership and management, supplement the offer. Many pupils also study art, opening doorways into careers in architecture and arts-based design careers.
- Leaders have made sure the curriculum provides very effectively for pupils' broader development and enables them to pursue their interests. The many-faceted 'UTC Pride' programme covers the wide range of topics and subjects needed to promote outstanding personal development across the board. The recently introduced character-management tool makes leaders and staff extremely well placed to gain an incisive understanding of the exact impact of this work.
- Leaders have worked tirelessly to recruit and build the staff team needed to realise their vision. Leaders are insightful practitioners, able to pinpoint the exact next steps needed in developing teaching. This was highly evident in leaders' observations of teaching during the inspection. They were quick to spot any aspect that needed sharpening.
- Leaders make sure the information they gather about teaching quality informs a wide and very effective range of staff training and support. Weekly development sessions and peer support groups of 'learning threes', along with expert contributions from elsewhere in the academy trust and further afield, all contribute. As a result, teaching and support provided for pupils is increasingly strong.
- The academy trust tends carefully to leaders' development and utilises their expertise. For example, the principal and senior leaders attend regular trust-leaders' forums, providing opportunities to shape wider trust policy and enabling cross-fertilisation of

ideas. Middle leaders benefit from the trust's middle-leadership programme.

- Sharp use is made of pupil premium funding. Extra sessions in English and mathematics have ensured that disadvantaged pupils catch up quickly from prior underachievement in these subjects. Disadvantaged pupils' broader emotional and social development is very well supported. Mentoring and counselling is there for those who need it. Involvement in schemes such as 'boxing for school' helps build confidence and self-esteem.
- Leaders have successfully tackled poor attendance and challenging behaviour. The importance of good attendance is continually reinforced across the school. The positive business-like ethos, coupled with weekly rewards for excellent attendance, encourage pupils to attend and recognise this as a basic requirement in the world of work. An improved behaviour policy, the business mentoring scheme and, not least, a curriculum that meets pupils' needs and ambitions all contribute to increasingly good behaviour.
- Leaders have made very intelligent use of their existing links and education business-brokering expertise to draw in an ever-wider net of employers. These employers play an increasingly significant part in enriching the curriculum and supporting pupils' successful progression into careers that match their aspirations.

Governance of the school

- The academy trust and governors work together extremely effectively. They play a pivotal role in ensuring that the school is an increasingly vibrant place for work-focused STEM learning.
- The trustees and governors share a deeply held conviction that the UTC will make a much-needed difference for young people and regional commerce. They have held fast to this as they have steered the 'UTC project' through times of notable challenge. They have made skilful use of their impressive education and business expertise, links and negotiating skills to achieve this.
- Governors have an astute insight into the work of the school and its effectiveness. Detailed board minutes evidence the high level of challenge and scrutiny brought to the school's performance. Governors have made sure that areas of relative weakness and previous poor teaching have been tackled rigorously. Continuing scrutiny assures them that necessary improvements are being secured. External reviews, such as recent ones carried out for behaviour and safeguarding, help governors corroborate the information they receive from school leaders.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders place a high priority on ensuring that pupils are kept safe and learn to be safe. Leaders have made sure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Checks on the suitability of staff are stringent. Regular training and briefings ensure that staff know what to do if they have any concerns about pupils' welfare. Leaders maintain effective communication with other agencies and raise concerns in good time to ensure suitable support for any pupil at risk of harm.
- The governor responsible for safeguarding carries out appropriate checks to make sure all is in order. He is sure to quiz newer staff he meets on his visits to check they are

crystal clear about their safeguarding duties. The academy trust ensures that suitable checks are carried out on employers who provide work experience. Employers receive training in safeguarding and are clear about referral routes.

- Relevant events, assemblies and visiting speakers promote pupils' understanding of how to assess risk and stay safe. Staff and pupils alike have all had appropriate training about the risks of radicalisation and the government's 'Prevent' duty. The curriculum promotes pupils' understanding of safety in working environments effectively. For example, in a Year 12 lesson, pupils were learning about health and safety at work legislation by exploring the hazards that might be present in the 'bat cave'.
- Incidents of bullying, including prejudice-based bullying, are rare. Pupils feel safe and are safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Most teaching captures pupils' interest well. It supports and motivates them to achieve very well. Teachers typically make the right choices about when it will work best to throw pupils into a task so they can uncover the learning as they go along, and the times when concepts need explaining first. Effective use is made of STEM-related contexts to help pupils link their learning together. For example, students studying for their English GCSE resit were developing their text analysis skills by reading a STEM-related text.
- Teachers provide pupils with helpful guidance as they progress, focused on their best next step in learning. Pupils value this and use it to help them. Additionally, in most lessons, pupils learn to reflect on their own learning and identify the gaps in knowledge or folders that they need to fill. This supports strong progress.
- Typically, teachers' subject knowledge is strong. They are passionate advocates, keen to impart their knowledge and skills and share the joy of their subject with their pupils. Teachers often use precise questioning to encourage deeper thinking and enable pupils to get stuck in to discussion and debate.
- Reading, writing and communication skills are, in the main, very well developed. In most lessons, teachers take account of the need to develop pupils' literacy skills and technical vocabulary. In technical subjects, teachers remind pupils to use correct technical language when discussing and writing about practical work. Those pupils who are behind in reading attend skilfully taught reading support sessions known as 'Lexicology'. These sessions elicit high levels of pupil engagement and result in impressive learning.
- Effective recruitment of skilled teachers, coupled with useful training and support, mean that areas where teaching was weaker have improved quickly. Nevertheless, teaching of science and the application of scientific and technical understanding in other subjects, such as design and technology, are not consistently strong. Pupils in key stage 4 commented that they felt they could be pushed more in science to help them learn better.
- In a few lessons, teaching does not engage pupils' interest and elicit the enthusiasm for learning seen elsewhere in the school. In such cases, pupils' progress is not so strong.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The curriculum places a high focus on developing pupils into well-rounded young people fully equipped for employment, and for STEM careers in particular. Pupils benefit from a wealth of developmental experiences. Staff tap into and nurture pupils' interests and skills. Employers and business mentors help pupils gain insight and experience of industry and the careers they might pursue. The careers adviser guides pupils to the options available and their best next steps. All pupils who left in Year 11 or Year 13 last year progressed into further study, employment or training. A notable number went on to higher-level engineering and IT apprenticeships.
- A wide and rich range of activities packaged together as 'UTC Pride' supports pupils' wider development. Pupils explore and discuss a whole raft of issues which help them learn about the world around them, develop their views and opinions, and become responsible citizens ready to take their place in society. The 'R&D' time at the end of each day provides time for pupils to pursue and expand their interests and develop a broad range of skills. Many get involved in working in teams to enter national STEM-related competitions. Others engage in enterprise activities or learn British sign language. Many visits, such as those to universities, the Globe Theatre and art galleries, broaden pupils' experiences and widen their horizons.
- Pupils gain immensely from 'UTC Pride'. This includes learning to be respectful and tolerant of people regardless of their differences. Pupils develop a firm understanding of equalities issues. Older pupils said that they and staff quickly challenge any stereotypical view or prejudicial behaviour. Pupils accept people as they are.
- Pupils benefit from a range of sports opportunities, including competitive football and athletics, gym club and boxing.
- Pupils feel safe and are kept safe and very well cared for. Pupils know their welfare is paramount and they can turn to staff for emotional and practical support when needed. Pupils learn how to stay safe and weigh up risk. For example, pupils talked of a memorable visit by the police and the fire service which heightened their awareness of the risks to be aware of as a road user.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils conduct themselves in a business-like manner and show pride in their work attire. They value the unique atmosphere and opportunities provided for them at the UTC. Pupils show maturity in the polite way they talk to one another, staff and visitors.
- There is a real sense of community as pupils socialise together at break and lunchtimes, making the most of the attractive seating spaces and work-like canteen area.
- Pupils' attendance has improved notably over the last two years. Overall attendance, and that of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or

disabilities, is now in line with the national figure.

- Incidents of fixed-term exclusion, which had previously been high, have been dramatically reduced over time. There have been none since September. Bullying is increasingly rare and, when it does happen, pupils are clear it is tackled effectively.
- Usually during lessons, pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They listen attentively, engage in discussion and make a consistently concerted effort. Most show pride in their work and their achievement. At times, where teaching in key stage 4 is not as engaging, pupils do not demonstrate quite the same excellent attitudes and a few become distracted. As a result, some low-level disruption occurs.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The school's curriculum provides a rich range of opportunities that leave pupils well prepared to follow successful careers and ready for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils who joined the school in Year 10 when it opened in 2014 had, on average, low prior achievement in primary school. Some of them had continued to achieve poorly at key stage 3, so were considerably behind when they joined the school. As a result of very effective teaching in most subjects, pupils typically make up lost ground. In 2016, by the end of key stage 4, pupils' progress across their best eight subjects was high for those with low end-of-key-stage-2 results, and average for others. Pupils' progress in mathematics from low starting points was of particular note, being above the national average.
- Current pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, also make strong progress in most subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Some aspects of pupils' achievement are not as strong. Achievement by the end of key stage 4 in 2016 was notably lower in some subjects, including science, than it was in others. Although current pupils are making increasingly good progress, the quality of teaching in science, although improving quickly, is not yet routinely strong enough to ensure sustained and rapid progress. Additionally, pupils' grasp and application of key scientific concepts and technical knowledge remain a little underdeveloped, most notably in design and technology.
- The most able pupils typically have their needs met well. In most subjects, they develop and apply their skills and knowledge to a high degree.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leaders have made sure the sixth form provides very well for its students. The curriculum is highly appropriate. It provides a suitable balance of technical and academic study. All students study mathematics alongside technical qualifications in either engineering or computer science. Some complement this study with science or design and technology at A level. The extended project qualification which students undertake enables them to explore an area of interest and develop a range of research and development skills. Work experience, the use of live projects, competitions, visiting speakers and business mentors give students a rich insight into career possibilities and

develop their employability and enterprise skills well.

- The sixth form and key stage 4 are, very much, one continuous provision. As such, teaching in the sixth form contains the same strengths and variations as reported elsewhere. Students value the time and effort that most teachers take to make lessons motivating and go that extra mile to ensure that everyone is 'on track'. Students commented that in their view the standard of teaching is mainly excellent. However, they felt that teaching in a few lessons was not very motivating or set in a context they could understand.
- Achievement in technical subjects is typically high. In 2016, all students who entered for a level 3 technical qualification achieved distinction. Achievement in core mathematics and the extended project was also high. Students' progress in other subjects was broadly average.
- Current pupils achieve increasingly well. However, they are not achieving consistently highly across the breadth of their study programmes. School assessment information indicates that, while they are making good progress overall, nearly half of Year 13 students are not currently on track to reach their target in one or more subjects. In Year 12, although progress in most subjects is strong, this is not consistently the case across the breadth of the curriculum.
- Those who need to, retake English and/or mathematics GCSE with a high level of success. The majority have improved their grade and most gained a grade C in English.
- Students' wider development is extremely well supported by the 'UTC Pride' programme and 'R&D' sessions. Of note is the recent 12-week political literacy programme which enabled students to get a real grasp of government, the role of MPs and current affairs.

School details

Unique reference number	140987
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10024486

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

Type of school	Other secondary
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	193
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	91
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Bob Findlay
Principal	Stephen Leahey
Telephone number	01322 626600
Website	http://theleighutc.org.uk/
Email address	info@theleighutc.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- This university technical college (UTC) opened in September 2014. The school is a member of Leigh Academies Trust. It is sponsored by the University of Greenwich and a range of employers, including Kennard Engineering, Eurostar, HVMS Power Engineering, Beck & Pollitzer, BA Systems, Dartford Council, Bluewater, and the

Department of Medical Engineering and Physics at King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.

- The school caters for pupils from the age of 14 to 19 and specialises in computer science and engineering.
- The school is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school. It has space for 600 pupils. Half of the pupils are in the sixth form.
- Most students are White British. The proportion from a minority ethnic background is average, as is the proportion which speaks English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- A high proportion of pupils are identified as having additional special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most of these have a specific learning difficulty.
- The UTC school day is longer than the usual school day. Pupils start at 8.30am and leave at 5pm. Students in the sixth form have home study on Wednesdays. Pupils in key stage 4 do not attend on Wednesday afternoons.
- The school is opening a provision for 11- to 14-year-olds in September 2017, The Inspiration Academy @ The Leigh UTC. It is currently oversubscribed for its first year.
- METskill Limited (SEMTA apprenticeship service), an independent learning provider, runs apprenticeship training at and in partnership with the school for young people aged 18 upwards. When inspected by Ofsted in November 2016, this training provider was judged to be good.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 21 lessons, 13 jointly with senior leaders. Short visits were made to three tutor-group sessions, also with a senior leader. In addition, the inspectors scrutinised samples of pupils' work from a range of subjects, including English, mathematics, science, engineering, and design and technology, together with subject leaders.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the Leigh Academies Trust and members of the UTC board. Inspectors held discussions with senior and middle leaders, teachers, pupils and parents. The lead inspector also met with a representative from the local authority who provides support to the school.
- An inspector met with a group of employers who work in partnership with the school. These included those who had recruited previous students and/or provided work placements or mentoring. Inspectors also met with some ex-students.
- The inspectors reviewed documents, including safeguarding policies, behaviour and attendance records, self-evaluation and planning documents and the school's records on performance management and teaching and learning.
- Inspectors took account of 30 staff survey responses and 12 responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. In addition, inspectors considered five parent responses by free text. There were no responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Diana Choulerton, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Alan Taylor-Bennett

Ofsted Inspector

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