

Inspection of University Technical College Norfolk

Old Hall Road, Norwich, Norfolk NR4 6FF

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 January 2025

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Good

The headteacher of this school is Francis Bray. This school is a member of the Community Schools Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Simon Elliott, and is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Phoebe Clapham.

What is it like to attend this school?

University Technical College Norfolk (UTCN) prepares its pupils exceptionally well for employment in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Pupils participate in an extensive range of encounters with employers. This includes the Year 12 'Find Your Futures' programme, in which students research topics such as wind farms and present to business leaders. All pupils take part in work experience.

The school has very high expectations of how well all pupils can achieve. The ambitious curriculum is usually well taught. As a result, pupils often achieve highly.

Pupils behave exceptionally well. Staff have clear and high expectations of all pupils, and pupils work hard to meet these. If pupils need support to improve their attitudes to learning or their attendance, staff work tirelessly to help them do so. Over time, pupils become increasingly confident and resilient learners.

The school teaches pupils how to stay safe, for instance, on the roads and online. Pupils learn about consent and healthy relationships. Pupils say, however, that they would like a wider range of clubs and more opportunities to develop their leadership skills.

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

The curriculum at UTCN is, in most subjects, precisely designed. The school rigorously checks pupils' knowledge when they start in Year 10. Staff use this information to plan and adjust the curriculum to address any gaps and errors in pupils' understanding. The curriculum builds knowledge well, ensuring that pupils learn what they need to achieve well in most areas of the curriculum.

Teachers use highly consistent approaches in lessons. They systematically check how well all pupils have learned the intended curriculum. They use these checks to adjust their teaching with real skill to ensure pupils have grasped important knowledge securely, ready to move onto new content at an appropriate pace. In a few subjects, the curriculum is not as well designed and taught. Consequently, pupils do not develop the breadth and depth of knowledge that they should in these areas of the curriculum.

The school is determined that all pupils achieve their potential. The school checks how well pupils can read. Pupils receive highly effective support from well-trained staff. This helps them become fluent and accurate readers. Staff identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) very effectively. They ensure that pupils receive the support they need to access the curriculum and achieve highly.

Students in the sixth form benefit from an exceptional provision. They have a raft of opportunities to learn, through first-hand encounters, about the world of work. This includes high-quality work placements in T-level programmes. Outcomes in applied and technical qualifications are very strong. As a result, many students progress into high level and degree apprenticeships and gain employment in leading engineering companies.

Pupils treat each other and adults with politeness and respect. Lessons are a haven of calm. Pupils are highly self-motivated. They are determined to be the best they can be. Sixth-form students mentor younger pupils to achieve their goals. Pupils attend very well.

The school's personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum teaches pupils about topics such as personal finance and how laws are made. They participate in clubs such as art, Formula 1 and sporting competitions. Some pupils, however, feel that the scope of these is too narrow to fully explore their interests outside STEM. They would like a broader range of experiences and opportunities. The school is aware that these aspects of its personal development offer should be developed further.

The school is relentless in its determination for all pupils to succeed. All staff receive high-quality training to carry out their roles. Staff feel very well supported with their well-being and workload. They use high-quality resources developed with and from other schools in the trust. This reduces the amount of time they need to plan. As a result, staff turnover is low. Trustees and governors check the school's work thoroughly to ensure its quality.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some areas of the curriculum are not as well developed and taught as others. Pupils, therefore, do not develop the breadth and depth of knowledge that they should in these subjects. The school should review its curriculum offer and provide support for staff to ensure its provision in all areas of the curriculum is consistently effective.
- Pupils would like a wider range of clubs to broaden their interests outside STEM, and more opportunities to develop their leadership skills. The school should review its provision and work with pupils to develop its extra-curricular offer and increase the range of student leadership opportunities.

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	141086
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10345396
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	421
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	152
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Phoebe Clapham
CEO of the trust	Simon Elliott
Headteacher	Francis Bray
Website	www.utcn.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	14 and 15 May 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a university technical college. It provides technical education for pupils aged 14 to 19.
- The headteacher started in September 2024.
- The school currently uses one registered and one unregistered alternative provision for pupils.
- The school 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 inspector(s) carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, computing and engineering. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects and visited a range of lessons.
- Inspectors held meetings with a range of leaders including the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator.
- The lead inspector met with members of the local governing body and the chief executive officer of the trust.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at other times around school. They met with groups of pupils to discuss behaviour in the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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 scrutinised a range of records relating to behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors considered the responses and free-text comments received during the inspection to Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors took account of responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Steve Woodley, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sally Garrett

Ofsted Inspector

Sue Child

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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