

Inspection of UTC Reading

Crescent Road, East Reading, Reading, Berkshire RG1 5RQ

Inspection dates:	4 and 5 February 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Inadequate

The headteacher of this school is Jennie Thomson. 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, Joanne Harper, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Nick Evans.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy the professional environment provided at UTC Reading. Most select to attend this school because of the specialist curriculum on offer here, with its focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Pupils appreciate that their learning is closely linked to the wider world of work. They benefit from opportunities to hear directly from employers locally, nationally and internationally.

Pupils behave well here. They treat each other with respect and unkindness is rare. Any bullying is dealt with promptly and effectively by leaders. Pupils recognise that behaviour in their lessons has been transformed over time so that they can now learn without distractions. Pupils feel safe in school and rightly trust that they can speak to a member of staff if they have any issues.

Some pupils come to this school for a fresh start, having found education difficult previously. They respect their teachers and value that they are known as individuals. They recognise that the school believes in them and has high expectations of what they can achieve. This motivates them to work hard, and pupils go on to a range of impressive destinations.

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

The school has put in place a suitably broad and ambitious curriculum that reflects its areas of specialism as a university technical college (UTC). It has thought carefully about what pupils learn and how this links to the school's wider purpose to prepare pupils for the workplace. Pupils, and students in the sixth form, generally achieve well. Most achieve well in core subjects and outcomes in vocational qualifications are excellent.

Pupils join this school part way through their secondary education from a range of different settings. This means that pupils typically enrol in Year 10 with very different starting points and prior knowledge. The school quickly checks pupils' starting points when they join the school and identifies any special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school uses this information to put in place additional support such as reading interventions. These are effective at supporting pupils to improve their reading so that this is not a barrier to their learning. Teachers are provided with information about pupils with SEND and how to meet their needs. This is mostly used well to ensure that pupils can access the curriculum.

Over time, teachers check that pupils are learning and making progress towards ambitious end points. However, teachers do not consistently use this information well to adapt the curriculum. Sometimes the work pupils are given is either too difficult or not challenging enough. This sometimes prevents pupils from learning as well as they could.

The school has successfully improved pupils' attendance over time so that this is now close to the national average. The school works very well with pupils who have previously displayed challenging behaviour. The number of suspensions has reduced over time and such sanctions are used appropriately.

The school's careers programme is a notable strength, including for students in the sixth form. Pupils benefit from a wide range of opportunities to meet with employers, visit workplaces and learn about their options for the future. This enables pupils to understand and access the full range of destinations and pathways available to them. There is a broad curriculum for personal, social and health economic (PSHE) education which prepares pupils effectively for life in modern Britain. For example, pupils learn about the features of a healthy relationship and how to keep themselves safe when online. Students in the sixth form benefit from a highly relevant PSHE curriculum, teaching important life skills such as managing money and independent living.

Working within the context of a supportive multi-academy trust, the school has been successful in bringing about substantial improvements since its last graded inspection. Leaders, including governors and trustees, have ensured that the right matters are prioritised, for example by first strengthening the school's arrangements for safeguarding. Teachers are proud to work at the school and recognise how it has improved over time. They appreciate that their well-being and professional development needs are carefully considered when leaders introduce new policies or initiatives. Governors and trustees have a robust oversight of educational standards at the school and share an ambitious vision for its future.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes the tasks and resources provided in lessons are not well-designed to meet the needs of all pupils. This means that some pupils do not learn as well as they could. The school should ensure that all teachers have the expertise required to adapt the delivery of the curriculum so that all pupils can achieve to the best of their ability.

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	139268
Local authority	Reading
Inspection number	10341735
Type of school	Secondary
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	284
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	147
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair of governing body	Jonathan Adams
CEO of the trust	Joanne Harper
Headteacher	Jennie Thomson
Website	//www.utcreading.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	3 October 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- UTC Reading is part of Activate Learning Education Trust.
- UTCs are STEM-focused secondary schools and sixth forms set up in partnership with local employers. UTC Reading specialises in engineering and digital education.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- 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 inspectors 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.

In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with a range of senior staff about their areas of responsibility in the school including the headteacher. The lead inspector spoke with representatives of the interim executive committee, the board of trustees and the Activate Learning Education Trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, and design and technology. 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 also visited a number of lessons and spoke with leaders about the quality of education in some other subject areas.
- 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 spoke with staff and pupils at the school. Inspectors considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, as well as responses to the Ofsted surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Chris Ellison, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Peter Cox

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