

Inspection of Aylesbury UTC

Oxford Road, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP21 8PB

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 May 2024

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

The principal of this school is Joe Dunckley. This school is part of The Merchant Taylors' Oxfordshire Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, John Marston, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Ian Domville.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils value their work-related learning, the focused careers provision they receive and the opportunities they are given to explore their learning with adults. They are mature in their ability to question and debate. Pupils spoken to are confident to discuss the positive experiences they have at Aylesbury UTC, along with areas they think could improve.

Pupils on the health and digital learning pathway appreciate the industry-quality resources that they have access to. In these specialist areas, pupils develop the specific technical knowledge that they need to enter the workforce. In other curriculum areas, there is more to do to ensure that the curriculum is improved further.

The UTC has encountered several staffing issues since the last inspection. The appointment of the new principal is now ensuring there is a focus on further improving the curriculum. This is needed, as some aspects of pupils' education are not yet good enough.

Pupils feel safe and know that there are adults whom they can talk to if they have concerns. They recognise the pastoral care available to them, and once they have benefited from this attention, they appreciate how individualised it is. However, some pupils say that they are reluctant to use this support or report instances of poor behaviour. The UTC recognises this and is making changes to help pupils feel able to access any of the support which is on offer.

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

Trust and school leaders share a deeply held ambition to provide specialist education for the pupils who attend the UTC. Leaders recognise that the quality of education is not yet good enough. They have a clear understanding of what they need to improve, and many of the necessary plans are now in place. However, many of the plans are currently too new to have yet had the necessary impact.

The UTC aims for all pupils to access a broad curriculum. There is clear ambition to build on improvements already being made. This can be seen with reading. The UTC aims to support all pupils to gain the reading skills they need to learn effectively. Pupils' reading ability is assessed on arrival, and they read regularly in English lessons. However, the support for those who find reading more difficult is not yet appropriately provided. There is also further work to do to ensure that, in some subjects, pupils are supported to read and use the identified key technical vocabulary.

The curriculum for some core subjects, such as English and mathematics, is ambitious and well sequenced. However, other subjects in the curriculum are not as well constructed. In these subjects, individual lessons do not help pupils build a secure understanding of the topics they need to know. Learning activities are not

ambitious enough, so pupils learn less than they should. This can lead to pupils quickly losing confidence in using what they already know. Rightly, pupils would like improvements to be made to help them build their understanding, including strengthening the checking of prior learning before moving on to new topics.

Local employers have been involved in developing the curriculum, particularly in the sixth form. This has strengthened the UTC's high ambitions for pupils. The valuable workplace skills and experience pupils gain from these partnerships support pupils' success. The ambitious curriculum, and highly effective careers provision, contributes to almost all pupils completing their sixth-form study programmes successfully and moving into related employment.

Pupils are courteous and polite. Where the school's behaviour and reward processes are used consistently, lessons are generally free of disruption. Leaders have prioritised improving consistency. They have recently refined the behaviour systems and implemented further staff training. As yet, it is too early to fully see the impact of this work.

The UTC has well-established processes for checking if pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) when they join the school. As a result, pupils who are entitled to additional exam support get the help that they need. However, in some cases, the information teachers have about pupils' specific needs is not sufficiently detailed. This means that in-lesson support is not always precise enough. Furthermore, some pupils with more complex needs do not always benefit from regular support reviews. This is to ensure these pupils and their parents are consistently involved in considering what help is needed.

The UTC is focused on improving pupils' attendance. This is leading to improvements and rising attendance for pupils who had, prior to joining the UTC, not attended school regularly. However, there are still a number of pupils who do not attend the UTC regularly enough. While the school has been successful in helping to improve the attendance of some, there is still more work to do to ensure that others do not lose valuable learning time.

The UTC successfully uses a wide range of resources to support and help pupils to develop understanding of important learning within the personal, social, health and education curriculum. Pupils benefit from trips to theatres or foreign countries to expand their horizons and views of the world. The UTC has been careful to find organisations to teach pupils about keeping safe, positive relationships and potential risks. This ensures pupils' learning in these areas is regular and up to date. Pupils in Year 12 feel well supported in their future career decisions due to the opportunities they have to work alongside local businesses. However, other aspects of the personal development curriculum are not yet as well developed. Pupils do not always have sufficient opportunities to learn about different faiths, cultures or other aspects of life in modern Britain. Currently, there are limited opportunities for pupils to nurture their wider interests and talents through clubs and activities. Leaders recognise this and plan to expand the range of extra activities on offer.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils do not attend regularly enough. This means that pupils' education is fragmented, leading to gaps in their knowledge. The school must continue to ensure that its new attendance processes are used consistently to improve pupils' attendance.
- In many subjects, processes for checking pupils' understanding are not effective. New concepts and ideas are introduced before pupils are ready, meaning that pupils do not learn as much as they should. Routines must be put in place to help all staff to check pupils' understanding accurately and identify what needs to be taught next.
- While pupils with SEND receive planned support, systems for regularly checking its effectiveness are not in place routinely. This limits the progress that pupils can make. The school must ensure that all pupils with SEND benefit from precise targets and regular reviews which involve both parents and pupils.
- Behaviour systems and processes are not used consistently. This means that clear and reliable expectations are not always in place to support pupils to behave as well as they could. Leaders must ensure that all staff are able to promote positive behaviour through consistent, shared expectations.
- An effective curriculum for personal development is not in place for all year groups. This means pupils do not benefit from a curriculum that extends beyond the academic, vocational and technical learning. Carefully planned programmes to promote pupils' personal development must be implemented in both key stage 4 and key stage 5.

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	139434
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10321970
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	155
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	29
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ian Domville
CEO of trust	John Marston
Principal	Joe Dunckley
Website	http://www.aylesburyutc.co.uk/
Dates of previous inspection	22 and 23 March 2022, 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. There are currently two technical pathways available to pupils: digital and health.
- The school is a member of The Merchant Taylors' Oxfordshire Academy Trust.
- The school currently uses one alternative provider.
- 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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- At the time of this inspection, only Year 10 and Year 12 pupils were present in the school, as other year groups were on study leave.
- The inspectors held meetings with the principal, curriculum leaders and other staff.
- The inspectors met with the chair of the local governing body. They also met with the chair of trustees and the chief executive officer.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: science, English, mathematics and the digital pathway. For each deep dive, the inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- The inspectors examined a range of documentation provided by the school, including leaders' self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- 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.
- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. They also took into consideration the responses to the confidential staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Ed Mather, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Peter Cox	His Majesty's Inspector
Zoe Enser	His Majesty's Inspector

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