

# Inspection of Waterfront UTC

South Side Three Road, Chatham, Kent ME4 4FQ

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Inspection dates: 10 and 11 January 2023

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Sixth-form provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils at Waterfront UTC are treated with respect. Their voices are heard and valued. As one pupil told the lead inspector, 'We are not treated as numbers here; we are treated as individual people.' Pupils are enthusiastic about learning. They enjoy studying the construction and engineering specialisms. Pupils are rightly proud to attend a school that prepares them well for the future.

Pupils develop independence and maturity. They behave well in lessons and at break and lunchtimes. Staff have high expectations for pupils' learning and behaviour. Occasionally, pupils need reminders about the expectations, but they respond well to them. Pupils treat others respectfully, including staff and visitors. Bullying incidents are taken seriously and are dealt with effectively. As a result, pupils, as well as students in the sixth form, are happy and feel safe.

Pupils have plenty of opportunities to explore future careers. Importantly, they benefit from the regular contact they have with local employers who come into school. This helps to inspire them and to think about the types of jobs they could pursue. It also helps with their learning. Work experience opportunities give pupils a chance to see what it is like to enter the world of work.

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

Since joining The Howard Academy Trust (THAT), Waterfront UTC has gone from strength to strength. The trust has given the school intensive support over the last few years. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic and staffing changes, leaders' ambitions for the school have not dampened. Leaders have continued to have a relentless focus on rapidly improving the school. More pupils now choose the UTC because of its increasing popularity in the local area.

Over recent years, leaders have worked hard to develop an ambitious and well-planned curriculum. This is also true of the sixth-form curriculum, which links closely to the local needs of employers. The curriculum is brought to life through close partnership working with employers. As a result, pupils see the relevance of what it is that they are learning.

Pupils' knowledge and skills develop well across a range of subjects as they move from Years 9 to 13. They concentrate on vocational subjects that are focused on science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The discovery curriculum in Year 9 helps to bridge the gap between pupils' learning at their previous schools and the Waterfront UTC curriculum. Pupils' learning in Year 9 prepares them well for the study of construction and engineering.

Typically, pupils learn well in class. This is because learning is carefully matched to their individual needs. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well through subtle tweaks. For example, teachers ask them

slightly different questions. The way the curriculum is taught is increasingly more consistent. However, leaders know that there is still more to do to ensure this is the case across all subjects. Importantly, leaders recognise that subject leaders need to do more to check on and help staff teach the curriculum. For example, the way teachers check pupils' learning, and the feedback they give pupils about their work, is not as effective as it could be in all subjects.

Reading is an important part of the curriculum. Time is set aside daily for adults to read to pupils. Pupils have opportunities to read in lessons. They also have dedicated reading sessions, which are part of the English curriculum. Staff value reading and appreciate its importance. Pupils are assessed regularly, including when they join the school. This helps staff to tailor their support to individual pupils.

Pupils have positive attitudes towards learning. Tellingly, for some pupils, this was not always the case at their previous schools. Many pupils praise the UTC for improving their learning, reflecting that they are glad that this is their school. While many pupils attend well, there is more to do to ensure that all pupils attend school every day.

Pupils' personal development is good. A comprehensive personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum gives pupils and students in the sixth form the important knowledge they need about a range of topics. For example, they learn about peer pressure and the risk of illegal drug use. Pupils learn about debt, overdrafts and taxes. Recently, they explored the cost-of-living crisis and found out about the ways they can support their parents emotionally through difficult times. The PSHE curriculum works well for most pupils. However, pupils in Year 11 do not have opportunities to discuss important topics as frequently as pupils in other year groups.

Trustees and governors are knowledgeable about the school. They understand its strengths and areas for development. This has enabled them to scrutinise the work of leaders closely. They visit the school to check for themselves that what they are told by leaders is happening in practice.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know pupils extremely well. This helps them to spot concerns about individuals. Staff are trained well and receive regular reminders about important safeguarding topics. The systems in place ensure that staff report concerns quickly. Safeguarding leaders take their responsibilities seriously. They follow up each concern to ensure that the right support is put in place for pupils and their families. Through the curriculum, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. They have trusted adults they can talk to about any problems they have.

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

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some subject leadership is not as strong as it could be. This means that there are inconsistencies in how well subject leaders monitor and support staff to implement the curriculum. Senior leaders need to ensure that subject leaders have the knowledge and skills to better support the consistent implementation of the curriculum.
- Too many pupils do not attend frequently enough. This means that they do not access the education on offer. Leaders need to ensure that strategies for improving attendance are timely and effective.
- The PSHE curriculum is not as strong in some year groups as it is in others because of the way it is timetabled. As a result, some pupils do not understand some of the important content that they need. This is particularly the case in Year 11. Leaders need to review how this curriculum is taught to ensure consistency across all year groups.

## 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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	146648
<b>Local authority</b>	Medway
<b>Inspection number</b>	10256250
<b>Type of school</b>	Technical
<b>School category</b>	University technical college
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	14 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	267
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	56
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Dan McDonald
<b>Principal</b>	Fiona McLean
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.waterfront-that.org.uk">www.waterfront-that.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- This is a university technical college (UTC). It provides technical education for pupils aged 14 to 19. It has specialisms in construction and engineering.
- Waterfront UTC is part of The Howard Academy Trust. It is sponsored by the University of Greenwich and a range of local employers.
- The UTC's employer partners include Laing O'Rourke, Arcelor Mittal, BAE Systems, Pantera, Alltask, RB Plant, National Grid, ECITB, CITB, Medway Council, Redrow and Mid-Kent College.
- The principal took up her post in April 2022.
- Students in the sixth form follow one of two pathways, the UTC core pathway or the foundation pathway.
- Most pupils typically join the school in Year 9. However, pupils also join at the start of Year 12. Some join in other year groups.

- The school currently uses three registered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information 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.

- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the principal, senior leaders and members of staff.
- The lead inspector held meetings with representatives of THAT, including the chief executive officer and the director of education.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, engineering and 3D design. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum, visited lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also visited a sample of other lessons and company time. They explored the PSHE curriculum and looked at some aspects of construction.
- The lead inspector met with the head of school and the special educational needs coordinator. They visited lessons together to explore the support for all pupils, including those with SEND.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors discussed safeguarding with leaders, governors, staff and pupils. They reviewed the school's policies and procedures used to keep children safe, including a check of the single central record.
- Inspectors spoke with some of the school's employer partners.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to the confidential staff survey and spoke to staff about their views of the school.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents and carers, including through the responses to Ofsted Parent View and additional free-text comments.
- Inspectors met with a range of pupils to discuss their views about the school.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and development plans.

## Inspection team

Shaun Jarvis, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Viki Faulkner	His Majesty's Inspector
Tom Neave	Ofsted Inspector

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