

West Midlands Construction UTC

Springfield Campus, Cambridge Street, Wolverhampton, West Midlands WV10 0JR

Inspection dates

19–20 June 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
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

- The principal, ably supported by senior leaders, has overseen rapid improvements in behaviour, attendance, teaching and students' progress. Leaders demonstrate openness and integrity. They have high expectations of staff and students.
- The school's curriculum is distinctive and well planned. Employers contribute impressively to many aspects of school life. The school's specialism is evident in all that it does.
- Not all middle leaders have the knowledge and skills to lead their areas without considerable support from senior leaders.
- Governors know the school well, including its many strengths and few weaknesses. They have considerable expertise in many areas. However, the governing body lacks sufficient expertise in secondary education to hold leaders properly to account for students' academic outcomes.
- Relationships between students and teachers are strong and respectful. Students trust their teachers and other adults in school. Consequently, students are happy to ask questions and try new challenges.
- Most teaching is very effective. Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to plan appropriate tasks that help students to make good progress.
- Some weaker teaching remains. Here, teachers' questions do not help to deepen students' understanding, and tasks are sometimes too easy or too hard.
- Current students are making good progress in almost all subjects. This is the case particularly in Years 10, 12 and 13. Historic weaknesses, evident in published data, have been eliminated.
- Students behave well in lessons and at breaktime and lunchtime. Disruption of lessons is now very rare. The school is calm and orderly throughout the day.
- Attendance has improved considerably since the school opened. However, it remains well below the national average for secondary schools.
- Students are mature, confident and articulate. The school is exceptionally successful in developing key employability skills such as communication and team working. Students are very well prepared for the world of work when they leave.
- Well-planned study programmes in the sixth form, including high-quality work experience, ensure that students make good progress. Many students move into the construction and built environment sector when they leave the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that students make strong progress in all subjects, especially in key stage 4, by ensuring that teachers consistently:
 - plan activities that are well matched to students' abilities
 - ask questions that help to deepen students' understanding of their work.
- Improve attendance so that it matches the national average for secondary schools.
- Strengthen the impact of leadership by ensuring that:
 - the governing body has sufficient expertise to hold leaders to account for students' academic outcomes
 - all middle leaders have the knowledge and skills to lead the improvements in their areas.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since his appointment to the school in September 2017, the principal has provided clear, authoritative leadership. He is well supported by able senior leaders. Together, they have built on the school's existing strengths and successfully addressed its weaknesses. Consequently, this academic year has seen improvement in all areas, including behaviour, attendance, teaching and outcomes. Staff appreciate their senior leaders' openness and integrity. Almost all staff who responded to their inspection questionnaire said they are proud to work at the school and that it is well led and managed.
- Leaders and governors know the school well and are committed to seeing it continue to improve. Their plans to address weaknesses are sensible and clear. They carefully think through improvement strategies, being careful not to burden staff with too many changes at any one time. They prudently evaluate the impact that improvement actions are having, refining them when necessary.
- The curriculum sets the school apart from more traditional secondary schools. It is successful in its stated aim of 'giving students a distinct advantage in seeking professional and technical careers within the construction, built environment and related information and communication technology (ICT) industries'. It has three distinct pathways, 'innovate, design and build', which focus on different aspects of the sector. Students benefit from high-quality specialist resources matched to each pathway, such as 3-D printers, computer-aided design, manufacturing software and a construction yard.
- Employers are extensively involved with the school, as patrons, partners, governors and mentors. They help to shape the curriculum, through an employer forum which meets five times each year. Consequently, the school is able to respond quickly to local needs and changes to employment patterns. The school is extremely well integrated into its locale and the construction and built environment sector. It is successfully helping to address local employment priorities within the sector and regeneration priorities in the Black Country.
- The formal curriculum is supplemented well by extra-curricular and enrichment activities, especially within the daily 'UTC extra' sessions at the end of each day. For example, the school has a Combined Cadet Force which attracts large numbers of students.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching in the school because of the checks they have carried out. They have targeted training well this year to aspects of teaching that are weaker and to subjects and individuals who need extra support. Almost all staff who responded to their inspection questionnaire said that they value leaders' use of professional development to challenge and support their improvement. The impact of this work is evident this year in the improved quality of teaching now evident across the school.
- Teachers' assessments of students' attainment are largely accurate. Consequently, leaders anticipated the apparently weak published outcomes of 2017. Leaders and teachers use assessment information to identify students who are beginning to fall

behind with their work and then provide extra support to help them catch up. Leaders also have a clear and reliable idea of how well groups of students are currently progressing. They use this information to evaluate how well intervention strategies are working, for example for disadvantaged students. Consequently, they make effective use of the pupil premium to support these students, who are making better progress as a result.

- Provision for students who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities has been good this year, following a review of roles and responsibilities at the start of the year. Staff are provided with detailed information about these students, with guidance about how to meet their needs in class. Teachers use this information well when planning lessons. Leaders provide weekly updates and training on specific issues. Consequently, although these students continue to make less progress than students who do not have SEN and/or disabilities, the picture is improving rapidly.
- Pastoral leadership is proving effective in improving behaviour and attendance. In common with other leadership in the school, leaders carefully evaluate the success of their actions and amend their strategies in the light of their assessments. For example, leaders evaluated the support received to improve attendance as ineffective. This has led them to negotiate a more efficient service with the local authority. This is contributing well to the school's improving attendance.
- Middle leaders form a committed and hard-working team. They are increasingly involved in checking on and leading their areas, albeit with the support of senior leaders. However, some middle leaders are new to post and others will join the school in September 2018. Consequently, not all have the knowledge or expertise to lead their areas independently.
- Leaders have sourced highly effective support from the Thomas Telford Multi-Academy Trust (TTMAT) which has contributed considerably to the school's improvement this year. TTMAT has provided mentoring for senior and middle leaders, support in monitoring teaching and moderation of teachers' assessments in several subjects, including English and mathematics.

Governance of the school

- Governors are committed to the school, to its vision and its distinctiveness as a university technology college. They bring considerable expertise and added value to the school in several areas, including the construction and built environment sector and higher education. This expertise is invaluable in developing the curriculum and ensuring that students receive high-quality careers guidance.
- Governors carry out their statutory duties diligently. For example, they carry out regular checks on safeguarding procedures and they carefully scrutinise the impact that additional funding, such as the pupil premium, is having.
- Governors question and challenge leaders effectively in most areas of school life, including the curriculum, safeguarding and finance. However, the governing body currently lacks expertise in the field of secondary education and governors do not fill this gap with external expertise. Consequently, they are overly reliant on leaders to provide the interpretation of published performance data. Their scrutiny of this area is therefore not as thorough as in other areas.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The leadership of safeguarding is meticulous. Systems are clear and fit for purpose. Records relating to child protection are detailed, well organised and secure. Training for staff is comprehensive, regular and carefully recorded.
- Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities well. They readily report any concerns they have, secure in the knowledge that they will be dealt with speedily and appropriately. Leaders involve outside agencies for support when appropriate and they are ready to challenge agencies when they believe that the best interests of students are not being served. Consequently, there is a strong culture of keeping students safe throughout the school.
- The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who responded to Parent View confirmed that their children feel safe in school, as did almost all staff who completed their inspection questionnaire.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Most teaching is now highly effective across subjects, in key stage 4 and the sixth form. Teachers have strong subject knowledge that they use well to plan lessons that interest and challenge students. Students generally enjoy their lessons and so work hard and are keen to do their best. Specialist teachers of construction expertly pass on their technical knowledge to students, who value their expertise.
- Relationships are strong across the school. Teachers know their students well. Students like and trust their teachers. Consequently, students are not afraid to take risks or attempt challenging tasks, secure in the knowledge that they have their teachers' and their fellow students' support.
- Most teachers use questions well to check students' understanding of their work. They expect students to answer in detail and they help them to refine their answers when they are incorrect or too brief. This means that teachers' questions usually help to deepen students' understanding of the material they are studying. Occasionally, some teachers do not use questions well. When this is the case, teachers are too ready to accept brief or inaccurate responses from students.
- High expectations of the quality and quantity of work that students produce are evident in most classrooms in all years. Teachers usually plan activities that take appropriate account of what students already understand, know and can do. This means that students make good progress. Occasionally, this is not the case and the work set is sometimes either too easy or too hard and students either finish quickly or struggle to get started.
- The teaching of students who have SEN and/or disabilities is effective. It is helping these students make increasingly good progress. Teachers understand their needs and plan activities that support them well. Learning support assistants provide skilful support in lessons and at other times.

- Teachers promote reading well, especially in key stage 4. Students read regularly in morning form times and in lessons. When preparing employer-led projects, students read widely and develop an excellent command of sector-specific technical vocabulary.
- Teaching in all subjects contributes well to the school's specialism of construction and the application of ICT in the built environment. This is the case in key stage 4 and the sixth form. For example, in a business studies lesson, inspectors observed students using information from a construction work placement when considering implications for health and safety. Similarly, students studying art graphics do this through a focus on architecture.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote students' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- From sometimes low starting points, in their time at the school, students develop into mature, confident, thoughtful and articulate young people. They are respectful of other students and adults, including those who are different from themselves. They are keen to share their views with adults and are able to express themselves with confidence and accuracy. Several students told inspectors how much progress they felt they had made since joining the school, having not been successful in their previous schools.
- The school's work to develop students' employability skills is particularly successful. Through regular employer-led group projects, students develop high-order communication skills and learn how to work as part of a team. Moreover, they take specific roles which successfully develop their understanding of the construction sector and its technical vocabulary. Consequently, students are very well prepared for the world of work when they leave the school.
- Effective careers education in all years helps students to plan their next steps in education and employment. Employer mentors provide much helpful support and knowledge, especially of the construction and built environment sector. Students told inspectors that they valued the support and advice from their mentors. Several were particularly appreciative of the high-quality work placements that mentors had helped them to secure.
- Students have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe from a wide range of potential dangers. A thorough personal, social, health and economic (PHSE) education programme runs in all years and is supplemented by assemblies and visiting speakers. Students eloquently explained to inspectors their understanding of issues including online safety, sexting, gangs and the risks of drugs and alcohol.
- Students feel safe in school. All students who spoke to inspectors confirmed this fact, as did almost all who completed their online inspection questionnaire. They told inspectors that bullying is very rare indeed. They also expressed great confidence in the school's adults to deal with any bullying, or any other issue, that might happen. Staff know students very well. Pastoral staff provide excellent support for students who need extra care.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good.
- Students behave well in lessons, both in key stage 4 and in the sixth form. They are attentive, respectful and keen to do well. They told inspectors that behaviour has improved this year and that disruption to learning is now rare. Inspectors saw no inappropriate behaviour during the inspection. The use of fixed-term exclusion, which has been high, has reduced considerably as behaviour has improved. The number of permanent exclusions from the school has also reduced, although remains above the national average. However, leaders use permanent exclusion appropriately, as a sanction of last resort.
- The school is calm and orderly throughout the school day, including at breaktime and lunchtime. Students move around the building sensibly. They are polite and well mannered. They arrive punctually in the morning, despite the fact that many travel a considerable distance, using public transport, to get to school.
- Attendance, which was very low in the school's first year of operation, has improved considerably in each subsequent year. It remains below the national average for secondary schools but continues to improve. For example, attendance in Year 10 is higher than in Year 11. On the inspection's second day, no student in Year 10 was absent.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Published data for the outcomes of students who left Year 11 in 2017 does not accurately represent the progress they made during the two years that they attended the school. This is because published progress figures measure the progress that students make from Year 7 to Year 11. Many students had made little progress while attending their previous schools, in Years 7 to 9, because of irregular attendance and/or poor behaviour. However, although better than published data would suggest, these students did not make good progress during key stage 4 in several subjects, including English and science. It was better in mathematics. Their progress was further impeded by the fact that the school was housed in temporary buildings, without specialist facilities. It moved to its current, purpose-built site in November 2016.
- Current students in all years are making much better progress than those who left Year 11 in 2017. Progress is strong in Year 10 across all subjects. Students are benefiting from improved teaching and first-class facilities. The school's assessment information, which has been checked through comprehensive external moderation with other schools, indicates that students are making good progress. Inspection evidence confirms this to be the case.
- Students in Year 11 are now making good progress in most subjects, including English, mathematics and construction. They have largely overcome legacy issues which arose from some weaker teaching and the lack of specialist facilities when they were in Year 10. Their progress is less good in some subjects, including science, but even here it is improving.
- Disadvantaged students, who make up the majority of students in key stage 4, make less progress than other students in the school and nationally. However, thoughtful use

of the pupil premium is seeing their progress improve and differences between their attainment and that of other students are diminishing.

- Many students join the school with reading ages below their chronological ages. Effective teaching and extra help mean that they make strong progress and catch up quickly.
- Students who have SEN and/or disabilities are making improving progress from their starting points, because of very effective support from leaders, teachers and other adults. The school's assessment information indicates that their progress remains less good than that of other students but confirms a trajectory of rapid improvement.
- Published examination data for students who left Year 13 in 2017 shows that outcomes in the sixth form were broadly similar to those reported nationally. As a result of effective actions taken by leaders, sixth-form students are now making much improved progress across a range of subjects. For example, students make particularly strong progress in construction, computer studies and physics. In vocational subjects, including business, sport and computing, their progress is not as good, but is improving.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The school's sixth form is well led. Expectations are high and all aspects of sixth-form provision are of a high quality.
- In common with key stage 4, the quality of teaching in the sixth form is good. Students routinely arrive ready and equipped for learning. Their positive behaviours and attitudes to their studies contribute well and support their good progress. Relationships between teachers and students are strong and students are motivated and eager to learn. They appreciate the commitment of their teachers and the good personalised support and strong pastoral care they receive.
- Teachers deliver well-paced learning, which engages students' interest well and promotes independence. In business, construction and mathematics lessons, students often work collaboratively and assess each other's work. They are encouraged to extend their understanding by using subject-specific terminology correctly.
- Links with employers within the construction sector are a strength of the school and this is particularly evident in the sixth form. Students' enjoyment of their learning and their appreciation of the range of employment and career opportunities available within the industry are supported particularly well through the regular talks and presentations delivered by visiting guest speakers. Students make excellent use of the support provided by the school's employer-mentoring scheme. Mentors take a keen and active role in supporting the development of students' vocational, personal and social skills. Students make good use of well-planned work experience placements with prestigious construction-related employers.
- Exceptionally detailed and well-designed industrial projects contribute effectively to developing students' understanding of the technical challenges associated with working on complex construction projects. For example, as part of a live project brief related to the design, procurement and delivery of a new urban tramway system being undertaken in the West Midlands, students work productively as part of an

interdisciplinary team. They undertake a range of demanding roles such as 'quantity surveyor', 'design engineer' and 'project manager'. They successfully improve their confidence and extend their employability skills in such areas as team working, problem solving and conflict resolution.

- Following the move to the school's current site, students now routinely make good use of the industry-standard resources to consolidate their learning and fine-tune their academic and technical skills related to construction. They produce work of a high standard and achieve well.
- Well-targeted information, advice and careers guidance enable students to make informed choices about the next stages in their learning and career. As a result, all students who left in Year 13 in 2017 progressed on to a range of positive education, employment and training destinations. Around half of these students subsequently took up places on degree courses related to construction and the built environment.
- There is effective support for students who have not achieved a standard grade or above in GCSE English and/or mathematics by the end of Year 11. As a result, these students make good progress and their attainment compares very favourably with national figures.
- Sixth-form students benefit from access to a range of enrichment activities that support well the development of their personal and social skills. Students talk passionately about the opportunities available at the school, including a construction-related challenge project and regular opportunities to develop and support their personal health and fitness. For example, through the school's Combined Cadet Force, students develop their wider understanding of themselves and the importance and value of public duty, as well as their roles as citizens and representatives of their community and the school. Students have a good understanding of modern British multicultural society. They value the diversity of their school community and are able to discuss issues thoughtfully, showing respect for the views of others.

School details

Unique reference number	140160
Local authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	10042839

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

Type of school	Technical
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	208
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	92
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Kerrie Jones
Principal	Avtar Gill
Telephone number	01902 872180
Website	www.wmcutc.co.uk
Email address	info@wmutc.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- West Midlands Construction UTC is a 14 to 19 university technical college with a focus on construction and the application of ICT in the built environment. It opened in September 2015.
- The school was housed in temporary buildings when it opened and moved to its current, purpose-built site in November 2016.
- The school has an above-average proportion of disadvantaged students.
- The proportion of students who have SEN and/or disabilities is well above average.

- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' progress at the end of key stage 4.
- The school does not currently make any use of alternative provision.
- The Thomas Telford Multi-Academy Trust (TTMAT) provides support to the school in several areas.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in lessons, and some of these observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors met with three groups of students and talked to many others about their learning and their attitudes to, and opinions about, school. They observed students at breaktime and lunchtime and as they moved around the school. They considered 77 responses to Ofsted's student inspection questionnaire.
- A wide range of documents were scrutinised, including information relating to governance, attendance, behaviour, safeguarding, students' progress and the checks made on the quality of teaching.
- Meetings were held with the principal, senior leaders, middle leaders, teachers and three governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors took account of parents' views by considering 39 responses to Parent View, including 23 free-text comments and an email from a parent.
- Inspectors took account of the 33 responses to Ofsted's staff inspection questionnaire.

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