

# Liverpool Life Sciences University Technical College

41 Greenland Street, Liverpool L1 0BS

<b>Inspection dates</b>	26–27 January 2016
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
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

- Strong leadership by the Principal, governors and business partners drives a clear vision across the university technical college (UTC). This ensures that pupils and learners flourish with high-quality experiences in science and health care.
- Senior leaders who are relatively new in post have quickly established robust systems across the UTC to drive improvements and raise success for all pupils and learners.
- Pupils and learners are very well cared for and consequently make substantial gains in their knowledge.
- Teachers instil high aspirations and expectations by developing strong working relationships with pupils and learners.
- The sixth-form provision is good. The curriculum and study programmes are personalised and offer excellent opportunities for all learners. As a result, they develop good skills and attitudes that prepare them well to make well-informed choices about next steps in education, employment or training.
- The UTC provides an exciting forward-thinking curriculum for science and health care. Strong connections with employers and industry experts provide sophisticated and well-balanced learning experiences. These provide pupils and learners with a springboard onto worthwhile destinations.
- The behaviour of pupils and learners is outstanding. They are committed to learning and model strong communication and employability skills.
- The UTC promotes pupils' and learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well.
- The work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. The UTC is a haven for pupils; pastoral care is strong.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although current progress is now good, too few pupils make more than expected progress in English and mathematics.
- Learners aged 16 to 19 do not always make rapid progress.
- Recent systems to improve teaching and learning have not yet led to rapid improvements in pupils' and learners' outcomes.
- Opportunities to correct common errors and raise the importance of spelling, punctuation and grammar are sometimes missed by teachers.
- Some pupils' use of technical vocabulary is not well established in their written work across the UTC.
- Some pupils lack well-developed independent study skills to boost their own learning.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of teaching even more to further accelerate pupils' and learners' progress and raise their attainment by:
  - developing and embedding pupils' independent study and revision skills
  - continuing to ensure that the best teaching and learning skills are shared among all staff.
- Ensure that all leaders improve pupils' and learners' literacy skills and reduce common errors by:
  - checking that the literacy strategy is consistently applied across all subjects within the UTC
  - making sure that all subjects prioritise and promote the use of technical vocabulary in pupils' and learners' written work
  - placing greater importance on the correct use of spelling, punctuation and grammar in pupils' written work.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Since the UTC opened, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Principal have taken decisive and determined action by making well-judged appointments within the senior leadership team. This has ensured that good teaching and robust quality assurance systems have developed quickly. The Principal is very well supported with the depth of expertise of senior leaders.
- The Principal has bonded the new leadership team together. They work as a cohesive group, united in purpose, providing a clear vision and direction for staff, pupils and learners. The core commitment and promise by the UTC to guarantee and support all learners in gaining a university placement, apprenticeship or job is reflected across all aspects of the UTC. This ethos resonates strongly among all staff.
- Rigorous systems for checking pupils' and learners' progress are now established and staff take seriously their accountability for pupils' and learners' outcomes. Most leaders use these systems successfully to identify underachievement and provide appropriate support to accelerate pupils' and learners' progress.
- The UTC's self-evaluation is accurate and is closely linked to its improvement planning. Effective partnerships have been forged with other schools and universities to verify the accuracy of leaders' judgements and teachers' assessments. For example, links with examination boards, Liverpool John Moore's University and science advisers have been established to check judgements made by teachers and leaders across the UTC.
- Senior leaders work hard to further develop the skills of middle leaders. A rolling programme of professional development is in place across the UTC including high-quality external training opportunities.
- Newly appointed staff from other establishments bring good skills and passion to teaching and learning within their subjects. All staff in the UTC benefit from development opportunities. A strong culture of improvement is being established across the UTC. Leaders value the importance of developing teachers' professional skills and aspirations, thereby building a culture of continuous improvement.
- The UTC has excellent links with employers and partners who provide excellent support and are committed to supporting and enhancing learning by offering real-world experience through well-planned work placements. Leaders work to shape the curriculum, with a specific focus on the technical skills and knowledge that relate to future jobs and skills shortages, matching the needs of the local economy. Leaders bring in industry experts, consultants and practitioners from hospitals to support pupils' subject development and increase their understanding of the world of work. Consequently, pupils' and learners' aspirations are raised, barriers are removed and pathways to future jobs are well developed.
- Leaders have been pragmatic in ensuring that the curriculum makes a strong contribution to pupils' destinations as well as being broad and balanced. Leaders seek reflections from all stakeholders, making creative adjustments in response to feedback: for example, changing the timing of the day and providing a broader range of choice within the humanities and social science curriculum, including the introduction of Health Care Cadets. The curriculum opens up pupils' choices or potential and helps to broaden their horizons.
- The UTC's work to promote pupils' and learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is outstanding. Leaders and managers ensure that pupils and learners receive appropriate religious education and develop wider skills and understanding through the well-planned culture curriculum. This programme provides good opportunities for pupils and learners to engage with moral and ethical issues in the context of business and enterprise and the world of work, as well as preparing them for life in modern Britain. For example, pupils and learners study personal financial management and gain a personal financial qualification.
- Pupils' and learners' spiritual and moral development is also enhanced by visits to the UTC from regular outside speakers. For example, pupils and learners attended a presentation on assistive technology and the challenges it brings, and how it could enhance non-verbal communication in care settings. Pupils' and learners' spiritual and moral development are also enhanced by the opportunities provided to raise considerable amounts of money for different charitable causes. For example, a number of learners are fundraising to travel and support the Lotus Trust, a charity in India that works to build classrooms and alleviate poverty.
- Leaders and managers promote equality of opportunity well, such as by providing masterclasses to promote women in science with good role models. Pupils and learners make up a richly diverse community; they are encouraged to work well together and no form of discrimination is tolerated. The UTC provides excellent support for pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable to discrimination. Pupil premium funding is focused well on improving the progress of pupils. Consequently, gaps in achievement

between disadvantaged pupils and their peers are closing.

- The UTC works effectively with parents and carers. Leaders have improved the frequency and quality of communication offered to parents regarding pupils' and learners' progress. There are clear strategies to engage the wider parental community across the wide geographical area from which pupils and learners are recruited. The UTC works extremely closely and effectively with the parents of pupils and learners who experience difficulties from time to time, including pupils and learners whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. Leaders understand their role within the local community and support various clubs, such as a local rugby club and also a local football club.
- The local authority and the UTC work together. Sharing of knowledge is frequent for the benefit of learners and pupils.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and have identified where improvements need to be made. The leadership and strategy for developing and improving teaching and learning have improved significantly since the UTC opened. The recent development of a 'teaching and learning forum', involving a selected group of staff with identified strengths in teaching and learning, is used to drive new life and creativity into some teaching and learning, improving pupils' and learners' outcomes. However, strategies to improve teaching and learning need more time to impact fully on all pupils and learners.
- **The governance of the school**
  - Governors are highly supportive and committed to the development of the UTC; they are passionate about the value and opportunities it offers to pupils and learners. They play a clear role in the construction of the development plan and have a clear vision for the future development of the UTC.
  - Governance is well organised and governors' commitment to school improvement is strong. Governors visit frequently and have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and learning across the UTC.
  - Governors have a good grasp on the financial management of the UTC. They know how pupil premium funding is used and its impact on improving the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and learners.
  - Governors challenge the UTC to improve. They are highly skilled and use their business acumen to ask sharp questions, providing challenge to leaders on any underperformance identified. Governors act swiftly to improve leadership within the provision.
  - Governors monitor performance management well and provide incentives for high-performing staff.
  - Governors ensure that safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements. They have excellent knowledge of all current issues, including the 'Prevent' strategy. Governors and staff benefit from helpful safeguarding training.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Most teachers have very good subject knowledge and a firm understanding of the courses they are delivering. They plan effective lessons to engage most pupils in their care. Many teachers have a passion for their subject which is communicated strongly to pupils in their care. All teachers have access to good quality professional development. There is a continued focus on improving the mastery of teaching skills.
- The best teachers use their subject knowledge to question pupils well to determine their understanding of key concepts and ideas, and they challenge pupils to think deeply.
- Both pupils and teachers use technology well to promote and embed learning. Leaders, partners and governors have invested heavily to ensure that pupils and learners experience industry- and university-quality techniques and equipment, engaging and inspiring learners and invigorating teaching. For example, pupils developed their ideas and understanding in analytical chemistry by using nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy and infra-red spectroscopy.
- Teachers at the UTC have high expectations of pupils' work, attitudes and learning behaviour, along with a good understanding of the difficulties faced by some pupils in their care. They work well with leaders and non-teaching staff to remove barriers to learning.
- Pupils across the UTC undertake project-based learning with the aim of developing their problem-solving skills and improving their social and communication skills. Pupils work together alongside sixth-form learners who act as role models and offer mentoring and support to ensure success.

- Spoken communication is well developed in most subjects. Teachers plan and encourage discussions in the classroom. The most effective teaching ensures time for pupils to formulate ideas into clear thoughts. The UTC ensures that there is a plethora of opportunity for pupils and learners to engage in discussion: for example, through classroom-based activities, meeting employers or their regular mentoring sessions. Improving communication is important to the UTC in its drive to improve pupils' and learners' life and employability skills.
- The UTC has developed a robust marking policy to support learning. Assessment is frequent and well organised across subjects. Pupils receive valuable feedback on how to improve their performance in order to succeed in examinations.
- All pupils are encouraged to immerse themselves in enrichment programmes to develop their skills beyond their taught subjects. These build pupils' and learners' confidence and aspirations. For example, the UTC is committed to delivering the Duke of Edinburgh Award along with other culture and sporting activities.
- Leaders have been resolute in driving improvements; consequently, the quality of teaching and learning has improved significantly during the last academic year. Leaders encourage the sharing of the best teaching but there is still a way to go in developing this strategy.
- Teachers focus on the progress they expect pupils and learners to make. Their predictions of pupils' examination performance are accurate because of frequent checking of their assessments of pupils' work with other schools and examination boards. Pupils' and learners' progress is tracked well by teachers and appropriate intervention is well organised to bridge gaps in learning and understanding. However, pupils and learners sometimes rely too heavily on staff to provide structured revision plans; their skills in research and personal enquiry are not always well developed.
- Not all leaders strive to improve pupils' literacy. Approaches are varied and messages about the importance of literacy are diluted. The quality of pupils' written work is mixed. Sometimes teachers do not help pupils to identify and correct errors in spelling and grammar in their written work. Key technical vocabulary in pupils' and learners' written work and the importance of the correct use of spelling, punctuation and grammar is not systematically driven across the UTC by all staff.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding**

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The UTC's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. The UTC is relentless in ensuring that pupils are safe within and beyond the building; for instance, it provides a shuttle bus to escort pupils and learners safely to local train stations and transport links. Pupils say that they feel very safe on site. Those who met with the inspectors said that bullying is exceptionally rare and is dealt with highly effectively. Pupils know where to go for help should they need it and they have great confidence that they will be supported well should they have any problems.
- The UTC's work to keep pupils safe and secure is highly effective. There are clear systems to support staff, pupils and learners. For example, staff receive training in safeguarding and radicalisation, which has heightened their understanding of the danger and risks posed to pupils and learners. Staff are highly skilled and act prudently to keep all pupils and learners safe.
- The UTC is conspicuously successful in turning round the lives of young people who were previously at risk of disengagement from education. The motto, 'Every day is an interview', is the backbone of UTC life. Consequently, pupils and learners are highly motivated and well supported with their real-world experience through well-planned work placements. All pupils and learners follow personalised pathways through the 'Build my future' programme, which ensures that future destinations are highly successful.
- The UTC is highly vigilant in identifying those pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable to harm. It undertakes active preventative work with pupils, for example through the development of resources related to radicalisation. The UTC also ensures that all pupils and learners are aware of the dangers of social media and that they recognise how misuse can affect future employment opportunities.
- The well-balanced and structured culture programme provides clear guidance and opportunities to develop pupils' and learners' understanding of British values and personal, social, health and economic education. For example, pupils and learners have developed their understanding of gang culture and how to deal with the complexities in modern society.

- The student leadership team, comprising a selected group of pupils and learners, meets regularly with senior leaders to share their experiences and request needs and developments. This allows leaders to gain immediate, honest feedback on new initiatives and ensures a rapid response to the needs of pupils and learners. Support agencies, such as the Brook Clinic, are very well integrated into the life of the school and help pupils and learners to make safe choices.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Excellent conduct, engagement in learning and significantly improved attendance are enabling pupils and learners, including those who may have been disaffected earlier in their school lives, to make strong progress and believe in their own futures. There is a palpable sense of community spirit among pupils and learners. They show genuine respect for one another and take exceptionally good care of the buildings. Social spaces are used well; the distinction between working time and social time is observed properly. There is a business-like ethos throughout the UTC; learners are well aware of the demands that will be placed on them as young adults, and they present themselves with striking maturity.
- Pupils and learners moderate their own behaviour: they are self-disciplined and self-aware. Supervision by staff is well coordinated in an already orderly environment. Inspectors observed and felt a strong climate for learning; pupils respond very well to the activities provided for them and their behaviour in lessons is typically exemplary.
- Pupils are friendly and courteous to one another and to adults. Relationships between pupils and with staff are highly positive and mutually respectful. Pupils wear their uniforms with pride. They are well prepared for lessons and keen to learn.
- The rate of pupils' and learners' exclusion from the UTC for poor behaviour has fallen significantly since it opened. When they first joined the UTC, a significant number of pupils had had behavioural difficulties at their previous schools. The vast majority respond very well to the high expectations and engaging curriculum provided by the UTC. There have been no repeat exclusions for individual pupils because where exclusion has been used, it has had a beneficial effect.
- Staff are rigorous in challenging pupils' and learners' absence; the attendance rate has significantly improved and is now in line with the national average for secondary schools. There has been a notable improvement in the rates of attendance for pupils who did not attend their previous schools regularly.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

**are good**

- Pupils enter the UTC with mixed attainments at Key Stage 3. Some pupils arrive with a considerable learning lag.
- Pupils currently studying at the UTC are making good progress across a range of subjects due to much-improved attendance, better-matched curriculum pathways, improved teaching and learning, and a more incisive tracking and intervention system to support pupils in need of additional help.
- New appointments across the UTC have strengthened teaching and learning. Changes to middle and senior leadership, combined with a stronger emphasis on improving teachers' classroom skills, are leading to improved progress for pupils currently on roll. Leaders are resolute in driving improvements, and outcomes are rising.
- All groups of pupils are now making good progress, including those pupils who are disadvantaged. Their rates of progress in English and mathematics compare favourably with other pupils nationally and in the UTC. Gaps in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and their peers are closing.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make good progress because of the support they receive.
- Pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment; extremely high proportions of pupils progress to higher-level courses post-16.
- Some of the most-able pupils did not make consistently good progress in 2015 across the UTC. However, information relating to current pupils displays a rise in the success of the most-able across a wide range of subjects. Leaders have implemented a 'scholar's programme' for identified most-able pupils and learners, improving the quality of provision and consequently pupils' outcomes. Stretch and challenge in lessons have improved and learning experiences for the most able are of good quality.

- Overall progress and attainment in 2015 were below national figures and too few pupils made the expected progress in mathematics and English. The proportion of pupils gaining five GCSE qualifications at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, was around national figures. However, current information within the UTC shows a swift improvement in progress and attainment. Pupils are set to improve upon national figures and achieve well in English and mathematics in 2016.
- Pupils with low literacy levels receive well-structured and coordinated support to enable them to effectively improve their reading and numeracy skills. There has been significant improvement in reading skills for targeted pupils. The reading recovery programmes are effective in developing and improving pupils' reading. However, work to develop spelling, punctuation and grammar is not always effective across the UTC and pupils' development in this area is too shallow. Consequently, common errors do still exist among a few pupils and learners which limits their achievement.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

## are good

- Leadership of the sixth form is effective. The curriculum is regularly evaluated to ensure that learners benefit from a cutting-edge and diverse curriculum that matches the needs of developing industry.
- Leaders and teachers set high expectations for learners and, as a result, learners make good progress both in and outside their lessons. The calm and inclusive ethos of the UTC enables learners to develop high levels of respect for themselves, their teachers and their peers. Learners feel that they are respected as young adults, and appreciate the business-like environment provided by the UTC. Learners arrive at their lessons well prepared for learning and ready to work. The professional dress code develops work-readiness skills and supports the UTC's motto of 'Every day an interview'.
- Pastoral support for learners is good. Learners said that they feel safe and well prepared for the outside world. The curriculum, extra-curricular activities and cultural programmes enable them to deepen their understanding of life in modern Britain.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers use their specialist knowledge and skills very well to motivate and challenge learners to excel. Most learners enjoy their lessons; they produce work of a good standard and make good progress. Assignment briefs, in the majority of vocational subjects, are developed in collaboration with employers including the local hospital and the science faculty at the University of Liverpool. This approach develops learners' employability skills while giving them a deeper knowledge and understanding of the world of work.
- The study programme is skilfully managed; it ensures that learners study personalised learning programmes that help them progress to their chosen career, employment or apprenticeship. Good-quality, impartial careers information, advice and guidance provided by highly qualified specialist advisers support learners in making well-informed choices about their next steps in education, employment or training.
- Enrichment activities and external work experience are well planned and clearly focused around learners' career aspirations. For example, work placements are provided at the accident and emergency department of the local hospital for those learners interested in nursing or in laboratory work, as well as for those interested in science-based careers. Project-based learning activities in the innovation laboratories very successfully develop learners' employability skills, for example in using a range of techniques in researching antimicrobial compounds.
- Learners who have not yet achieved grade C or above in GCSE English and mathematics are placed onto appropriate courses. Resit success has improved and outcomes are good.
- Retention of learners in the sixth form has improved and has now stabilised; nearly all learners complete courses from start to finish.
- A key strength of the UTC's provision is the excellent links with local and national employers and their contribution to the enhancement of the curriculum and the development of work-related skills and aptitudes. The UTC's rich and diverse partnerships means that learners participate in a range of stimulating projects and work experience which shape their skills to a high level. As a result, learners are exceedingly well qualified for their next steps. The UTC has been awarded the national science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) Assured Status in recognition of its work with emerging technology and meeting the needs of employers.
- Learners are very well prepared for their future destinations. They frequently secure places at competitive and prestigious universities; others move on to highly regarded apprenticeships or go directly into employment with training provision.

- Teachers' feedback to learners is constructive and helps them to improve their work. However, errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar are not routinely corrected in learners' written work or during class activities.



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	139588
<b>Local authority</b>	Liverpool
<b>Inspection number</b>	10008159

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	University technical college
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	14–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	528
<b>Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes</b>	330
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Nigel Ward
<b>Principal</b>	Phil Lloyd
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 230 1320
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.lifesciencesutc.co.uk">www.lifesciencesutc.co.uk</a>
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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Liverpool Life Science UTC opened in 2013, has a specialised focus on computer science and health care. This is the first inspection carried out since it opened. The curriculum at the UTC also covers a range of academic subjects including English and mathematics.
- The UTC is much smaller than an average secondary school and has pupils in Years 10 to 13. There is a higher proportion of girls at the UTC than boys. The majority of pupils are white British with just over a quarter from other ethnic heritages. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs or disability is average and the proportion with an education, health and care plan is well below average. The proportion of pupils eligible for the government's pupil premium grant is much higher than the national average.
- The UTC does not use alternative providers. A wide range of employers and local businesses provide pupils in Key Stage 4 and learners in the sixth form with placements related to the school's specialisms.
- The UTC is co-located with another school in the Northern Schools Trust: the STUDIO School, Liverpool. Some teaching is delivered by teachers from both schools.
- The UTC has a range of sponsors and business partners. Lead sponsors are University of Liverpool; Royal Liverpool Hospital; North Liverpool Academy; 2Bio. A core part of the UTC's provision is delivered through the college's work with business partners: Redx Pharma; Thermo Fisher; Unilever; Pro-Lab Diagnostics; Novartis; Mast Group; Nutricia; Siemens; Terumo; Actavis; Croda; Liverpool Community Health; Liverpool Vision; GETRAG; PSS; Twilight Midwife; LGC; Red Ninja; Local Solutions; Skills for Health; U5.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations of pupils' attainment and progress.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in a wide range of lessons across all year groups, including observations with senior leaders and three learning walks. Inspectors also observed a number of 'project-based learning' sessions. During these observations, inspectors looked at pupils' and learners' work and talked to them about it. They also looked at the latest information on the progress of pupils and learners in the class and checked this against the quality of their work.
- Inspectors formally interviewed a large number of pupils and learners, including the junior and senior leadership teams and spoke to a range of pupils and learners informally at break and lunchtime. Inspectors also observed pupils' and learners' conduct and behaviour throughout the school day.
- Meetings were held with the Principal, Vice-Principal, other members of the senior team, middle leaders, newly qualified teachers, the Chair of the Governing Body and governors, and a number of partners linked to the school.
- The inspection team observed the school's work; scrutinised data about pupils' and learners' achievement, behaviour and attendance; scrutinised pupils' and learners' work; looked at documents used by leaders to check the school's work; reviewed minutes of meetings of the governing body; viewed records relating to the monitoring of teaching; and read reports of visits by the Department for Education and other education consultants. During the inspection, detailed consideration was given to policies and practices relating to safeguarding, and also to how the school prepares its pupils and learners for life in modern Britain.
- Inspectors took account of the 36 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as data from the UTC's own parental surveys. They also considered the responses to the staff and pupils' online questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Dawn Platt, lead inspector

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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