



London Design and Engineering UTC

Address: 15 University Way, E16 2RD

Unique reference number (URN): 142903

Inspection report: 18 November 2025

| | |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Exceptional |  |
| Strong standard |  |
| Expected standard | |
| Needs attention | |
| Urgent improvement | |

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Exceptional ●

Attendance and behaviour

Exceptional ●

Pupils want to be in school regularly so attendance rates are high. Leaders put in place firm and effective support for pupils who do not attend regularly, particularly for the number of pupils who join with previously low attendance.

The school is a wonderfully positive community where pupils live up to leaders' high expectations of how to behave. High-quality support is in place for pupils who may have previously struggled with their behaviour. Serious incidents of poor behaviour are incredibly rare. Bullying, if it occurs, is dealt with right away. Any prejudicial language or attitudes are simply not tolerated by anyone, at any time. Excellent behaviour is typical across the school. Staff understand, and apply, the behaviour systems consistently well. Pupils treat each other and staff with the utmost respect. Pupils are passionate about their learning because lessons are relevant and engaging. They have mature attitudes to their studies. Communal spaces buzz with pupils and students talking about their learning or helping others. Older students are excellent role models for younger pupils as they exemplify the professional traits that they have learned from their work with employers. By breaking down pupils' barriers to success, the school motivates and inspires pupils to want to aim high and do well.

Curriculum and teaching

Exceptional ●

A highly effective and exciting curriculum is in place across the school. This is because leaders know what is needed in a 'cutting-edge' curriculum. Consequently, pupils have access to an ambitious range of academic and technical subjects and qualifications which are closely aligned to the school's design and engineering specialism. Each subject has excellent links with local and national employers. These links lead to experiences that bring the various subjects to life and make learning relevant and memorable for pupils. The curriculum is expertly designed to not only teach pupils important knowledge but to ensure that they are remarkably well-prepared for their future.

Well-qualified staff use their expert subject knowledge and deep insight of the curriculum to adapt it to pupils' varied starting points and any special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff help new pupils to the school quickly secure the important essential knowledge that they need to access the curriculum and succeed. This is because teachers' checks on learning are highly effective and show where pupils may need extra help and support.

Curriculum areas are well resourced so that pupils and students benefit from high-quality, up-to-date, industry level resources and equipment to help them learn. The curriculum is highly inclusive and contains various 'pathways' that support pupils' academic achievement, regardless of any barriers to learning.

Inclusion

Exceptional 

This highly inclusive school has a truly positive impact on pupils' attendance, behaviour, achievement and their lives. Helping all pupils to be successful is at the heart of the school's work. Leaders are forensic in their approach to working closely with pupils and their families to identify barriers to pupils' success. Some pupils arrive at school with substantial gaps in their knowledge or previous school experience. Leaders do everything in their power to reduce these barriers so that all pupils can thrive and succeed. This enables pupils to access the demanding curriculum and gain secure knowledge and skills. As a result, pupils develop their self-belief and set high aspirations for their future. All support, for instance the effective pupil premium strategy, is carefully monitored to check it is working to address gaps in pupils' knowledge or to provide pupils with extra pastoral support when needed. Information about pupils' needs, including special educational needs and/or disabilities, is shared readily with highly-trained staff, so that they know the most effective practices to use to meet each individual pupil's needs. Leaders have a very positive and productive relationship with parents, carers and other stakeholders, which further supports the school's exemplary inclusive practice.

Leadership and governance

Exceptional 

Leaders put inclusion at the heart of their work. Their forensic understanding of the school, pupils and the local community means they are laser-focused on breaking down the barriers that their pupils and students face. This approach stretches to how leaders support staff too. Leaders give staff the time, compassion, professional development and expertise to do their jobs well. As a result, the school works as a cohesive team, with a shared goal of supporting all pupils to be the best they can be. Leaders' actions are working as pupils clearly enjoy school life, feel well supported and achieve great outcomes academically and in their personal development.

Expert, highly-qualified directors hold leaders to account and fulfil all of their statutory responsibilities. Directors have an in-depth knowledge about what is working well and where further work is needed. They support leaders to manage resources well so that the school is equipped with industry-level technology and resources. Leaders and directors work with others to ensure that the best possible practice is brought into the school to benefit pupils. They have already built a reputation for excellence. They do not keep their practice to themselves, working closely with the Baker-Dearing education trust and other schools to share their expertise. Leaders at all levels, along with the staff, have positively transformed the lives of many pupils for the better.

Personal development and well-being

Exceptional 

Personal development is the golden thread that runs through the whole of school life. Every opportunity, experience or trip is carefully planned to contribute to and expand pupils' experiences and take them beyond their day-to-day lives. The cutting-edge careers education is exemplary. By working closely with a wide range of local and national employers, the school enables pupils to build highly-detailed knowledge about the world of

work. Regular meetings with employers enable pupils to effectively co-operate with others, work in project teams and grow in independence.

Supported by leaders, pupils carefully track their own experiences so that they can build a sense of pride in their achievements. The well-regarded chaplaincy and life skills lessons further complement the extensive personal development curriculum and support pupils' moral and social development. Pupils work with a range of multi-national employers from different countries and cultures and this brings to life the importance of fundamental British values, tolerance and respect. All aspects of the personal development programme weave together to support pupils to develop and succeed. A well-planned personal, social, health and economic education programme, for example, gives pupils an in-depth understanding of how to build positive relationships and how to avoid risky behaviour.

Leaders break down barriers to ensure all pupils access the trips, clubs and experiences that enhance the personal development programme. Each experience is purposefully designed to support pupils realise their potential. For instance, trips to parliament, abroad or attending the high-quality clubs build pupils' self-esteem and confidence in themselves.

The excellent pastoral system is worthy of note. It contributes to the positive school culture and profound sense of pupil belonging and community. Staff have a deep understanding of pupils' needs and, as a result, pupils feel well cared for and looked after. This further builds pupils' determination to work hard and do their best.

Strong standard ●

Achievement

Strong standard ●

The rich curriculum, supported extensively with employer experiences, enables pupils and students to build strong knowledge of the academic or technical subjects that they study. In addition, the expertly planned transition curriculum ensures that pupils who have recently joined the school form strong foundations, including in reading, for future achievement. Regardless of starting points, pupils progress well through the curriculum and go on to attain highly in national tests and assessments. The attainment of disadvantaged pupils in the core GCSE subjects of English, mathematics and science, for instance, is above the national average for disadvantaged pupils and the gap with their non-disadvantaged peers is closing quickly. Pupils, and students in the post-16 provision, leave the school with a wide range of qualifications that support them well with their next steps in education, training or employment. Students studying technical subjects, for example, build excellent industry standard knowledge and expertise. Nearly all pupils transition on to high-quality destinations, many linked to the local and national employers who work in partnership with the school.

Post 16 provision

Strong standard ●

A high-quality, engaging study programme is underpinned by a range of academic and technical qualifications. With the backing of local employers and other appropriate industry

experts, the post-16 curriculum is further enriched with projects and other experiences that bring learning to life. Staff, with a range of expert industry and academic expertise, teach the curriculum very well. As a result, students, including the most disadvantaged, build extensive knowledge about the subjects that they study. They produce high-quality work. Students achieve a wide range of qualifications, for example Aviation Operations, which are not fully captured in the published data for the end of Year 13. They also benefit from relevant industry and workplace experience. A well-considered transition curriculum is in place to give students a 'step up' should they need it. Leaders break down barriers to learning, so that students are valued and supported to succeed in this highly inclusive post-16 provision.

Staff teach students about professionalism, business and the importance of study habits. Consequently, outside of the classroom, students work independently or take on additional challenges such as teaching primary-aged pupils about design and engineering. Students share their knowledge with each other in a climate of mutual respect and passion to see each other succeed. As a result of leaders' actions, students are incredibly well prepared for life beyond the school gates.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

This school is a safe, welcoming environment where pupils thrive. For many pupils, attending this school is life changing. The highly inclusive nature of the school means that leaders expertly identify and quickly reduce barriers to learning. Leaders know pupils' backgrounds extremely well. They know what works for them and what help pupils need. As a result, pupils succeed, regardless of their background or ability. They progress very well through the curriculum from their varied starting points. The school has high aspirations for all pupils and a desire for them to be the best they can be. Pupils value the highly effective pastoral support. For many pupils, this support has been key to their success. As a result of the incredibly positive school culture, pupils attend regularly, have excellent conduct and focus determinedly on their studies.

Pupils, including those in the post-16 provision, enjoy the varied and forward-thinking curriculum. They relish the challenge of their work and, in particular, how the school supports them to get real-life experiences that bring their learning to life. Pupils benefit hugely from the school's employer-led approach to curriculum design. Pupils achieve highly, not just in national tests and assessments, but in the way they build expert, industry standard knowledge and skills that prepare them exceptionally well for the future.

Older students are fantastic role models for younger pupils. They lead learning sessions or mentor and support younger pupils to be successful. Pupils speak confidently about their learning, because they have been taught a range of complex vocabulary linked to the academic or technical aspects of their curriculum. Well-considered trips and experiences build on pupils' learning, raise their aspirations and take them beyond their day-to-day lives. Students in the post-16 provision become 'young professionals' because embedded employer opportunities support all pupils to be confident and resilient. They are more than ready for the workplace or further study. They are equally well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Next steps

- Leaders and those responsible for governance should sustain the effectiveness of their work in all areas. They should seek continued improvement, overcoming barriers and challenges, in order to drive a transformational impact for all pupils. This includes disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or well-being.

About this inspection

The chair of the board of directors is Anne Heal.

The school is a University Technical College. The school's specialist (technical) subjects are engineering, art and design and construction and the built environment. Its main sponsors are the University of East London, Thames Water, Costain, Skanska and Chelmsford Diocese Educational Trust.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the chief executive officer, senior leaders, the chair of directors, directors, staff and pupils during the inspection.

Inspectors reviewed the findings of the parent, staff and pupil Ofsted online surveys.

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.

The school does not currently use alternative provision.

Principal: Geoffrey Fowler

Lead inspector:

Damian Loneragan, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Bessie Owen, His Majesty's Inspector


Rebecca Iles-Smith, His Majesty's Inspector

Claudia Harrison, His Majesty's Inspector

Hannah Glossop, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 18 November 2025

School and pupil context

Total pupils

792

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,067

School capacity

600

Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,152

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

46.82%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 28.9%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

2.02%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.09%

Pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) support

8.71%
Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Close to average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

| Year | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|---------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2024/25 | 53.5% | 45.2% | Close to average |
| 2023/24 | 45.5% | 45.9% | Close to average |
| 2022/23 | 50.5% | 45.3% | Close to average |

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

| Year | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|---------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2024/25 | 49.4 | 45.9 | Close to average |
| 2023/24 | 43.5 | 45.9 | Close to average |
| 2022/23 | 46.5 | 46.3 | Close to average |

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

| Year | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|---------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2024/25 | 48.1% | 25.6% | Above |
| 2023/24 | 34.8% | 25.8% | Close to average |
| 2022/23 | 43.2% | 25.2% | Above |

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

| Year | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|---------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2024/25 | 47.4 | 34.9 | Above |
| 2023/24 | 38.6 | 34.6 | Close to average |

| Year | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|---------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2022/23 | 40.2 | 35.0 | Above |

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

| Year | This school | National non-disadvantaged score | School disadvantage gap |
|---------|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 2024/25 | 48.1% | 52.8% | -4.8 pp |
| 2023/24 | 34.8% | 53.1% | -18.3 pp |
| 2022/23 | 43.2% | 52.4% | -9.3 pp |

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

| Year | This school | National non-disadvantaged score | School disadvantage gap |
|---------|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 2024/25 | 47.4 | 50.3 | -2.9 |
| 2023/24 | 38.6 | 50.0 | -11.4 |
| 2022/23 | 40.2 | 50.3 | -10.1 |

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

| Year | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|--------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2022 leavers | 97% | 93% | Average |
| 2021 leavers | 91% | 94% | Average |
| 2020 leavers | 96% | 94% | Average |

16 to 18 performance

A-level average point score

The average points that students achieved per A-level entry.

| Year | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|---------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2023/24 | 30.92 | 34.38 | Close to average |
| 2022/23 | 25.84 | 34.16 | Below |
| 2021/22 | 33.09 | 37.86 | Below |

A-level value added

A score showing students' progress between the end of key stage 4 and the end of their academic qualification studies.

| Year | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|---------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2023/24 | -0.3 | 0.0 | Below |

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

| Year | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2024/25 (1 term) | 6.4% | 7.7% | Below |
| 2023/24 | 8.1% | 8.9% | Close to average |
| 2022/23 | 9.4% | 9.0% | Close to average |

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

| Year | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2024/25 (1 term) | 20.9% | 21.1% | Close to average |
| 2023/24 | 24.1% | 25.6% | Close to average |
| 2022/23 | 27.5% | 26.5% | Close to average |

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standards expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standards set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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