

South Devon UTC

Address: Kingsteignton Road, Newton Abbot, Devon, TQ12 2QA

Unique reference number (URN): 141749

Inspection report: 10 February 2026

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.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils deepen their knowledge and skills over time in their specialist qualifications. They recall their learning well and can apply their skills with confidence. As a result, they are prepared well for their next steps in education, employment or training. This is reflected in the achievement of students in the post-16 provision, who consistently achieve in line with national averages in many qualifications.

At key stage 4, pupils' achievement is not reflected by published outcomes. This is because of the unique cohort of pupils who attend the school. Many face additional barriers and many join the school having previously experienced a disrupted education. Although their attainment is low in comparison to national averages, pupils quickly gain new knowledge and skills. Pupils often have gaps in their basic knowledge, when they join the school. They progress well through a carefully tailored curriculum to close these gaps.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Many pupils join the school with significant levels of absence historically. Leaders and staff help pupils to improve their attendance by building trusting relationships with pupils. For example, leaders identify barriers to pupils' wellbeing and put in place support, such as personalised routines. As a result of leaders' effective work, pupils' attendance improves over time and persistent absence falls. This is not reflected by the published data for pupils' attendance, which is consistently lower than the national average.

Leaders have established a kind and caring culture. Pupils feel known as individuals by leaders and staff. Pupils generally behave well, and most follow routines willingly. As a result, there is a calm, positive environment. Leaders ensure that they take quick and effective action to deal with any incidents of discriminatory or poor behaviour.

In classrooms, pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Although rates of suspension for disruptive behaviour have been high historically, leaders have taken effective action to improve pupils' behaviour. For example, they make suitable adaptations and provide effective support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of curriculum and teaching. They make well-considered decisions and take effective action to bring about improvements, when necessary. For example, they have adapted the curriculum and teaching in English in key stage 4 to strengthen its impact.

Pupils follow a carefully designed curriculum. Effective teaching secures pupils' basic skills in mathematics, for example. There is an effective programme to identify gaps in pupils' phonics knowledge. Leaders ensure that pupils receive the teaching that they need to read confidently and fluently.

Leaders ensure that teachers have the subject knowledge to implement the curriculum effectively. For instance, they have the expertise that they need to teach the different industry-relevant pathways that the school offers.

Teachers typically use assessment well to check what pupils know when they join the school and as they learn the curriculum. Teachers make appropriate changes to the curriculum and teaching, when necessary, to remedy gaps in pupils' knowledge.

Leaders and staff know pupils' individual needs well. Teachers make suitable adaptations and reasonable adjustments for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, when they are needed. Other staff provide well-targeted support under the careful direction of teachers.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Many pupils face barriers to their learning and/or wellbeing. For example, an exceptionally high number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) attend the school. Leaders get to know pupils before they join the school. This helps pupils to get off to a positive start. Leaders understand pupils' individual needs. They work closely with families and professionals to plan and review support. As a result, leaders ensure that the right strategies and approaches are in place to remove pupils' barriers to learning.

Leaders ensure that staff receive training on how to recognise and meet pupils' needs. For instance, staff apply suitable approaches and strategies to provide for pupils with different needs. Staff share leaders' high expectations of pupils' learning. Pupils are supported by staff to build their independence over time as a result.

Leaders review the impact of the support that they provide to pupils. For example, they evaluate the impact of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils. This has been used effectively, for instance, to raise their attendance.

A small number of pupils attend alternative provision. Leaders ensure that this has the intended impact on pupils, such as supporting their academic progress or wellbeing.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders, trustees and local governors share an ambitious vision for pupils. In the unique context of the school, leaders and staff enable pupils to make educational progress, regardless of the barriers that they face.

Leaders understand the school's strengths and areas for development. They take the right actions to make improvements. For example, they strengthen teaching through effective professional learning opportunities for staff. This includes how to meet the needs of the high number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. On the whole, leaders support staff well with their wellbeing and workload.

Trustees ensure that the school fulfils its statutory duties. They hold leaders to account and gain the insights they need to evaluate the school's effectiveness. This contributes to the

school's improvement. For example, leaders help pupils to improve their behaviour and raise their attendance. In doing so, leaders make decisions in the best interest of pupils.

Leaders engage constructively with parents, carers and other stakeholders relevant to the school's context, such as employers and other education providers. This builds trust and enhances pupils' opportunities, such as links with local universities and employers.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders implement a suitable personal development programme. An important feature of this is the development of pupils' employability skills. For example, leaders and staff help pupils to understand professional behaviours, such as being punctual and speaking appropriately. Through work experience, pupils engage meaningfully with industries relevant to their qualifications. For example, students on the engineering pathway benefit from work placement opportunities in medical equipment manufacturing.

Pupils receive tailored careers advice and guidance. This supports them to plan their next steps and prepare for employment. For example, they learn about different options, such as technical apprenticeships and higher education. Leaders ensures that pupils regularly hear directly from relevant employers, including the military and NHS, for instance. As a result, pupils are well prepared to make informed decisions about their next steps.

Leaders and staff quickly identify pupils' pastoral needs, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils who are disadvantaged. Pupils are supported to lead healthy lives, make sensible choices and form positive relationships with staff and peers. A suitable relationship, sex education and health education curriculum develops their understanding of healthy relationships, for example. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe online.

Pupils learn about fundamental British values. Through 'life skills', they explore the rule of law and celebrate differences between people protected in law, such as race and sexual orientation. Pupils learn about different religions from visiting speakers, for example.

Leaders track pupils' participation across the range of personal development opportunities on offer. Most pupils develop their character, such as developing their confidence to engage with unfamiliar adults through workplace activities. However, pupils' cultural experiences, and opportunities to develop their talents and interests, are not as developed as they could be. As a result, some pupils do not have enough opportunities to maximise their personal development.

Post 16 provision

Expected standard 

Leaders ensure that the post-16 provision meets students' needs, including those who face barriers to their learning and/or wellbeing. The curriculum is well designed and taught overall, building on the specialist knowledge and skills that pupils gain in key stage 4. Consequently, students generally achieve well at key stage 5. This is reflected in published outcomes from national assessments that are consistently in line with national averages.

Students are well prepared for their next steps. Leaders ensure that students receive independent advice and guidance, and have personalised plans to help them progress to their chosen destinations. There is a wide offer to help students understand their options, such as apprenticeships, employment or higher education. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, or who face other barriers, receive enhanced support.

Students gain a range of wider experiences, such as mentoring younger pupils and leadership opportunities. They help organise the Christmas food service, for example. Students receive a suitable relationships, sex education and health education programme and develop their employability skills, such as interview technique.

Leaders keep the post-16 programme under review and make improvements when necessary. For example, they have strengthened the personal development offer. Most students are benefiting well from this as a result.

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

Leaders and staff serve a unique cohort of pupils well at South Devon UTC. Many pupils have previously had a fractured educational experience and have significant gaps in their learning as a result. The number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, or who face other barriers to their learning and/or wellbeing, is exceptionally high. Leaders reduce the barriers pupils face effectively. Pupils go on to careers in engineering, health or digital technologies. They acquire relevant knowledge and skills for these vocations. For example, they benefit from hands-on experiences in a manufacturing workshop or in a model hospital ward.

Pupils are motivated to learn and succeed. The school's specialist curriculum pathways effectively prepare pupils for the workplace. Pupils achieve well on these pathways and make suitable progress in the other subjects that they learn.

Alongside their specialist knowledge, pupils gain the foundations that they need in English and mathematics. Effective teaching closes the gaps that pupils often have when they join the school. The clear progress that pupils make is not reflected in the school's published outcomes in examinations.

Leaders and staff prioritise building strong relationships with pupils. Consequently, pupils feel safe and known as individuals. Pupils quickly gain a sense of belonging. This provides the foundation that they need to learn and thrive.

The school is calm and orderly. Learning is rarely disturbed by poor behaviour. Bullying is uncommon. Leaders take effective action to deal with any issues if they arise. Although pupils' attendance is well below the national average, their absence reduces over time. This is the result of the effective support that leaders provide.

Pupils are generally well prepared for life in modern Britain. They learn about how they can make a positive contribution to society. Some raise funds for charities and others help in a

local primary school. Pupils learn how to represent their views and discuss others' views in a respectful way.

Next steps

- Leaders should reduce pupil absence further, so that pupils have high attendance and benefit further from the school's curriculum and wider personal development offer.
 - Leaders should ensure that the school's wider programme for pupils' personal development is tailored more precisely to pupils' needs, so that they have a wide range of opportunities to develop personally.
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About this inspection

The school is part of the Education South West academy trust, which means the other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Matthews Shanks, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Graham Austin.

The school is a University Technical College. It offers technical education for pupils aged 14 to 19.

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

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

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.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with pupils, school staff, school and trust leaders, trustees and local governors during the inspection.

Inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school uses 2 unregistered alternative providers.

Principal: Claire Plumb

Lead inspector:

James Oldham, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Vicky Wood, Ofsted Inspector

Daniel Roberts, Ofsted 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 10 February 2026

School and pupil context**Total pupils**

193

Well 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: 1,153

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

35.46%

Close to 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

11.40%

Well above 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

67.36%

Well above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Above 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 (revised)	10.6%	45.4%	Below
2023/24 (final)	17.7%	45.9%	Below
2022/23 (final)	7.1%	45.3%	Below

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 (revised)	25.7	46.0	Below
2023/24 (final)	29.6	45.9	Below
2022/23 (final)	21.2	46.3	Below

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 (revised)	4.0%	25.8%	Below
2023/24 (final)	3.6%	25.8%	Below
2022/23 (final)	0.0%	25.2%	Below

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 (revised)	21.0	34.9	Below
2023/24 (final)	19.9	34.6	Below
2022/23 (final)	15.9	35.0	Below

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 (revised)	4.0%	53.1%	-49.1 pp
2023/24 (final)	3.6%	53.1%	-49.6 pp
2022/23 (final)	0.0%	52.4%	-52.4 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 (revised)	21.0	50.4	-29.5
2023/24 (final)	19.9	50.0	-30.1
2022/23 (final)	15.9	50.3	-34.4

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
2023 leavers (provisional)	81%	91%	Not available
2022 leavers (revised)	90%	93%	Not available
2021 leavers (revised)	91%	94%	Not available

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 (final)	S	34.38	S
2022/23 (final)	S	34.16	S

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 (revised)	S	0.0	S

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

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 (2 term)	18.0%	8.1%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	18.4%	8.9%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	23.8%	9.0%	Above

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 (2 term)	46.9%	21.9%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	56.6%	25.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	55.6%	26.5%	Above

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 standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard 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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